

Highland Family Medicine

Patient Education

Obesity

What is obesity?

Obesity is defined as the condition of being very overweight and having a body mass index, or BMI, of 30 or higher. The BMI is a measure of your weight relative to your height. You can find your BMI from a chart.

Your waist size is also important. It is a measure of your abdominal fat. Your health risks increase as your BMI and waist size get larger. A waist measurement greater than 40 inches for men or 35 inches for women indicates a significant increase in health risk.

What are the risks of obesity?

Nearly one third of adults in the US are obese. Obesity increases as people age. It is a serious condition because it increases your risk of poor health and major illness, such as:

- high blood pressure
- breathing problems
- stroke
- heart disease
- diabetes
- hyperlipidemia, or increased fats in the body, often associated with higher cholesterol levels
- gallbladder disease
- gout
- some types of cancer
- osteoarthritis (stiffness and soreness of joints, especially the knees, that may occur with aging).

Obesity may make it harder for your health care provider to give you a good physical exam. Looking at the inside of your body with x-rays and other types of scans, as well as surgery, may also be more difficult.

Why do people get obese?

In the majority of cases, people are obese because they eat or drink too much, are inactive, or a combination of both. In a small number of cases, a medical condition or certain medications may increase the chance of becoming obese. Some people may have a genetic risk of becoming obese, but getting obese still requires the patient to take in more calories from eating and drinking than they burn off from exercise and daily activity.

Calories, common foods and exercise

Calories is a way of measuring how much energy is stored in foods. The more calories, the more energy. The more energy eaten, the more likely a person will become fat. Some foods have more energy in them by weight than do other foods. For example, a pound of fat has twice as many calories in it than does a pound of sugar. Although both will make you fat, you only need to eat a half pound of

fat to get the same amount of calories as in a pound of sugar. This does not mean you can eat all the sugar you want and you will not get fat. All calories matter, no matter where they come from.

Eating and drinking puts calories, or energy, into your body. Exercise and daily activity burns calories off. Gaining or losing weight is all about a simple equation. If you take in more calories from eating than you burn off through activity, you gain weight. If you burn off more calories through exercise than you take in from eating, you lose weight. But remember, the body is very efficient using the energy in the food we eat. Unless a person is very involved in strenuous exercise, it is difficult to lose weight purely through exercise. The best method of losing weight is to eat less and exercise more.

What most of us need is a "willpower" pill. We often know when to not eat, but we choose to eat more anyway. So far, researchers have not found the magical "willpower" pill. We all want an easy way out of this willpower problem. We want to eat what we want and not get fat. There are many diets and pills on the market that claim to help people lose weight. The reason there are so many diet losing choices on the market is because none of the methods work very well, if at all. Again, to lose weight, a person needs to eat less and exercise more. There is no magic here.

Simple calorie facts

- To gain one pound, you must eat 3,500 calories.
- Walking one mile uses up about 100 calories. This means to lose a pound purely by walking, you would have to walk 35 miles. Losing that pound through walking would also require that you eat no more than usual.
- One 12 ounce can of sugared soda has about 150 calories. Therefore, for each can of sugared soda you drink, you need to walk 1.5 miles. If you drink one can of sugared soda every day, you gain a bit more than one pound a month, or more than 12 pounds per year.
- Juice has about 165 calories per 12 ounces. Although you may think juice is more healthy than soda, juice often has more calories per ounce than soda. Therefore, juice can make you fat. The same applies to all drinks that have calories (koolaide for example)

First steps to losing weight

- Remember that everything you put in your mouth may increase your weight (food AND drink)
- Avoid sugared drinks – water or diet drinks are the only options
- Reduce portion size, and do not go back for seconds
- Exercise is an important part of losing weight and keeping it off
- It is better to eat 2-3 small meals a day than one large meal
- Eat more low calorie dense foods such as fruits and vegetables and avoid high-fat foods.
- Avoid junk foods such as sweets, potato chips, french fries, ice cream etc.
- Avoid between meal snacking – remember, everything you put in your mouth may increase your weight
- It is better to make small diet and exercise changes that result in 1-2 pounds loss per month than attempting to starve yourself and lose 10 pounds in one month.

Calculating Your Health Risk Using Your Body Mass Index

- Find your body mass index (BMI) on the chart below. Your body mass index uses your height and weight to estimate how much fat is on your body. Find your height on the left. Then find your weight on the row at the top. Your BMI is the number on the chart at the intersection between your height and weight.

Weight	105	110	115	120	125	130	135	140	145	150	155	160	165	170	175	180	185	190	195	200	205	210	215	
Height																								
5'0"	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	
5'1"	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	36	37	38	39	40	
5'2"	19	20	21	22	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	
5'3"	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	
5'4"	18	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	
5'5"	17	18	19	20	20	21	22	23	24	25	25	26	27	28	29	30	30	31	32	33	34	35	35	
5'6"	17	17	18	19	20	21	21	22	23	24	25	25	26	27	28	29	29	30	31	32	33	34	34	
5'7"	16	17	18	18	19	20	21	22	22	23	24	25	25	26	27	28	29	29	30	31	32	33	33	
5'8"	16	16	17	18	19	19	20	21	22	22	23	24	25	25	26	27	28	28	29	30	31	32	32	
5'9"	15	16	17	17	18	19	20	20	21	22	22	23	24	25	25	26	27	28	28	29	30	31	31	
5'10"	15	15	16	17	18	18	19	20	20	21	22	23	23	24	25	25	26	27	28	28	29	30	30	
5'11"	14	15	16	16	17	18	18	19	20	21	21	22	23	23	24	25	25	26	27	28	28	29	30	
6'0"	14	14	15	16	17	17	18	19	19	20	21	21	22	23	23	24	25	25	26	27	27	28	29	
6'1"	13	14	15	15	16	17	17	18	19	19	20	21	21	22	23	23	24	25	25	26	27	27	28	
6'2"	13	14	14	15	16	16	17	18	18	19	19	20	21	21	22	23	23	24	25	25	26	27	27	
6'3"	13	13	14	15	15	16	16	17	18	18	19	20	20	21	21	22	23	23	24	25	25	26	26	
6'4"	12	13	14	14	15	15	16	17	17	18	18	19	20	20	21	22	22	23	23	24	25	25	26	

- Measure your waist size.
- Use your BMI and waist size to determine your health risk on the chart below.

BMI	Waist size	
	35 inches or less (women) 40 inches or less (men)	More than 35 inches (women) More than 40 inches (men)
<18	Underweight	
18.5 to 24.9	Healthy Weight	
25 to 29.9	Overweight	Increased risk
30 to 34.9	Obese	High risk
35 to 39.9	Obese	Very high risk
40 or more	Extremely Obese	Extremely high risk