



WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

If you struggle with your weight, you certainly are not alone.

More than two-thirds of all adults in the United States are overweight or obese, and many children also carry extra pounds. While getting and keeping your weight under control may be difficult, there are many compelling reasons to do so.

Risk of Developing Chronic Diseases

People who are overweight or obese are at a higher risk for numerous diseases and chronic conditions that negatively impact the quality of life. Those who are obese are at an increased risk for heart disease, stroke, diabetes, high blood pressure, and various types of cancer. Obesity can contribute to arthritis, gallstones, asthma, cataracts, infertility, snoring, and sleep apnea.

These conditions not only make life difficult for those who suffer from them, but they also cost a staggering amount to treat. It's estimated that the cost of treating obesity-related conditions in America is \$190.2 billion per year – more than one-fifth of all medical spending. Additional costs relating to obesity include lost wages, job absenteeism, and disability and unemployment benefits.

Preventing Weight Gain as You Age

Most people ages 18 - 49 gain between one and two pounds a year. Because the weight is added slowly, it's possible not to notice the extra pounds until they are significant. Consider this, someone who gains two pounds a year between the ages 18 - 49 will add 62 pounds, an amount that almost surely will result in the person becoming overweight or obese.

According to medical experts, it's important to monitor your weight and take steps to avoid weight gain. If you notice your weight has increased even just a few pounds, you should work to lose the extra weight before it adds up to more. It's far easier to lose three - five pounds than to face the prospect of losing 60 pounds.

To reduce your risk of weight gain as you age, be mindful of what and how much you eat, exercise regularly, and get enough sleep.

Reaching and Maintaining a Healthy Weight

If you need to lose weight to improve your health, there is good news. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, even losing just a little weight is likely to produce health benefits. People who lose just five to 10 percent of their total body weight often see improvements in blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and blood sugars.

For instance, a man who weighs 240 pounds and loses 20 pounds is likely to experience health benefits despite being considered overweight or obese.

Consulting your primary care provider is a good idea before beginning any weight loss program. They can evaluate your overall physical condition and advise you on the types of exercise that could be beneficial. Your doctor might refer you to a nutritionist who can help you understand the kinds and quantities of foods you should be eating. You may also have access to the ConnectCare3 Nutrition Education program. The Nutrition Education program is individualized for each person's dietary needs and lifestyle.

If you are obese to the point where your health is in severe jeopardy, your doctor might prescribe medications or even refer you to a bariatric surgeon to discuss weight-loss surgery. In most cases, however, surgery should be considered only after you've exhausted non-surgical options.



Getting Started on a Weight-Loss Program

Many people find it helpful to identify and state the reasons they want to lose weight, whether it is avoiding a family history of heart disease or looking great for an upcoming class reunion. Set weight-loss goals and write them down. Keeping food and exercise diaries can also help keep you accountable for what and how much you're eating and the amount of exercise you're getting.

While important, weight-loss goals should be realistic and specific. Utilize the SMART Goals format to help you outline your weight-loss goals. The SMART goal format will help you set relevant and achievable goals within an attainable timeline.

Having friends or family members who support your weight loss efforts can make losing weight easier. You might consider joining a weight loss group or other support groups, which may be available through a local hospital or other health care organization.

ConnectCare3's Chronic Disease Management & Prevention program is another great tool to utilize if you are overweight or obese. The Chronic Disease Management & Prevention team works with individuals to create attainable lifestyle changes to help you manage your weight.

It's natural to want to lose a lot of weight quickly, but research shows people who lose weight gradually – about one to two pounds a week – have better success at keeping the weight off than those who shed pounds more rapidly. People who establish and continue with healthy eating and exercise habits are more likely to maintain weight loss than those who complete a diet or program and resume their former habits.

Healthline. "Obesity Facts."

Accessed at <https://www.healthline.com/health/obesity-facts>

Harvard University, T.H. Chan School of Public Health. "Healthy Weight."

Accessed at <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/healthy-weight>.

National League of Cities. "Economic Costs of Obesity."

Accessed at <http://www.healthycommunitieshealthyfuture.org/learn-the-facts/economic-costs-of-obesity>.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Healthy Weight, Nutrition, and Physical Activity."

Accessed at https://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/losing_weight/index.html

Keeping Your Weight Loss Healthy

Most people who lose weight experience health benefits, but in rare cases losing weight can actually become unhealthy. A small percentage of people become obsessed with weight loss and are at risk for developing eating disorders such as anorexia or bulimia. Risk factors for weight-loss obsession and eating disorders include poor body image, anxiety, and depression.

If you or someone you know is obsessed with weight loss to the point of engaging in dangerous behaviors like fasting, induced vomiting, laxative abuse, or extreme exercise, you should speak with your doctor. If your condition is severe, your care provider may recommend counseling or other treatment.

Reaching and maintaining a healthy weight is vitally important to overall well-being, but doing so in a healthy, sustainable manner is key. Don't be afraid to ask for help, either when starting a weight-loss program or if you fear your efforts to lose weight have gotten out of control.