

Weight Management

A healthy weight is good for your physical and mental well-being. Good eating habits and moderate exercise are crucial to keeping a healthy weight and a fit body. Being overweight—weighing too much in relationship to your height—is a problem for many people. If you are overweight, you have an increased risk of several health problems. The good news is that you can reduce these risks by losing weight.

Checking Your Weight

The body mass index (BMI) is a tool that often is used to measure body fat. It is based on height and weight. A person with a BMI of 18.5 to 24.9 is a normal weight. A person with a BMI of 25.0 to 29.9 is overweight, and a person with a BMI of 30 or higher is obese. About 4 in 10 women in the United States are obese.

If you are overweight or obese, you also should measure your waist size. Extra fat in the abdomen (an “apple” shape) is a greater health risk than extra fat in the hips and thighs (a “pear” shape). To measure your waist, stand up and place a tape measure around your middle, just above your hip bones. Take the measurement just after you breathe out. If your size is 35 inches or greater, your risk of certain health issues associated with being overweight is increased (see “Health Risks of Being Overweight”).

Factors That Affect Weight

Every function of the body—from building cells to moving muscles—needs energy. Energy is measured in calories, Calories also measure how much fuel is in a certain food. The body uses only as many calories as it needs for energy. Any calories that are left over are stored as fat in the body. Eating more calories than you use up is the most important factor that leads to weight gain. Some other factors include the following:

- Age—It is normal to gain a little weight as you grow older. You may not be as active as you were when you were younger. If you do not adjust your food intake, you may put on extra weight. Even as little as 100 extra calories a day can add up to an unhealthy weight.
- Genes—Genes may affect a person’s weight directly or indirectly. Some people have genetic disorders that lead to obesity. Others are at increased risk because being overweight or obese runs in their families.
- Pregnancy—After having a baby, a woman might not lose all of the weight she gained during pregnancy, the weight can add up.

Source: <https://www.acog.org>