

Obesity in Adults: Causes and Consequences

A variety of factors play a role in obesity. This makes it a complex health issue to address. Obesity is an epidemic that causes health problems for tens of millions of Americans.

Causes:

Overweight and obesity result most commonly from an energy imbalance. This involves eating too many calories and not getting enough physical activity.

Body weight is the result of genes, metabolism, behavior, environment, culture, and socioeconomic status.

Behavior and environment play a large role in causing people to be overweight and obese. These are the greatest areas for prevention and treatment actions.

Science shows that genetics plays a role in obesity. However genes do not always predict future health. Genes and behavior may both cause a person to be overweight. In some cases multiple genes may increase one's susceptibility for obesity and require outside factors such as abundant food supply or little physical activity to cause an effect.

Note: overweight is defined as a body mass index (BMI) of 25 or higher; obesity is defined as a BMI of 30 or higher.

Health Consequences of Obesity

Long-term excess weight can increase your risk of many illnesses and conditions, including: coronary heart



“burns off.” It works a lot like a scale. To remain in balance and maintain your body weight, the calories consumed (from foods) must be balanced by the calories used (in normal body functions, daily activities, and exercise).

A doctor is the best source to tell you

whether illnesses, medications, or psychological factors are contributing to weight gain or making weight loss hard. They can also help you formulate a healthy and effective way to lose weight. Learn more at <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/>

disease, type 2 diabetes , various cancers (endometrial, breast, and colon), hypertension (high blood pressure), stroke, diseases of the liver and gallbladder, osteoarthritis (a degeneration of cartilage and its underlying bone within a joint), and gynecological problems (such as infertility).

Preventing and Decreasing Obesity

Lifestyle and dietary changes are the best ways to address weight gain. Reduce time spent watching television and other inactive behaviors.

Build physical activity into regular routines, including at work sites. Taking the stairs or parking farther away are some examples.

Promote healthier choices including at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables a day and reasonable portion sizes. Provide food options that are low in fat, calories, and added sugars.

Count those calories! Weight management is all about balancing the number of calories you consume with the number of calories your body uses or

HIGHLIGHTS

Balancing your calories for a healthy weight: <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/calories/index.html>

Determining whether you're obese or overweight: <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/defining.html>

Obesity has many causes, including genes, environment, other illnesses, and lifestyle. It may even be all of the above. That is why speaking to your doctor is crucial to figuring out what to do about your weight.

Obesity can cause numerous health problems, including reduced longevity. Preventing or decreasing weight gain is one of the most important things you can do for your health.

For more health topics, visit www.dadehealth.org/atoz/atoz.asp