

live well, work well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home, and life—
brought to you by the insurance and healthcare specialists at
Moreton & Company.

Obesity: Epidemic Proportions

Obesity has reached epidemic proportions globally, with more than 1 billion adults overweight, at least 300 million of them clinically obese, and is a major contributor to chronic disease and disability.

Why an epidemic?

Here are some reasons we are experiencing such an increase in obesity:

- We are eating more energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods with high levels of sugar and saturated fats.
- We have more sedentary lifestyles with little to no physical activity.
- Economic growth, modernization, urbanization and globalization of food markets contribute to poor eating habits.
- Higher incomes and more urban populations encourage more varied diets with a higher proportion of fats, saturated fats and sugars.
- An increased shift towards less physically demanding work and less physical activity due to automated transportation, technology in the home, and more passive leisure activities.
- Genes are important in determining a person's susceptibility to weight gain as well; however energy balance is determined by calorie intake and physical activity.

Why is it so dangerous?

Obesity and overweight pose a major risk for serious diet-related chronic and life-threatening diseases, including:

- Type 2 diabetes.
- Coronary heart disease.
- High blood pressure.
- Stroke.
- Gallbladder disease.
- Endometrial, post-menopausal, breast, colon, gall bladder, prostate and kidney cancer.
- Osteoarthritis.
- High blood cholesterol.
- Sleep apnea and respiratory problems.
- Psychological disorders.
- Premature death.
- Reproductive complications.

Am I obese?

The prevalence of overweight and obesity is commonly assessed by using body mass index (BMI), defined as the weight in kilograms divided by the square of the height in meters (kg/m²). These markers provide common benchmarks for assessment, but the risks of disease can increase progressively from lower BMI levels:

- A BMI over 25 kg/m² is defined as overweight.
- A BMI of over 30 kg/m² is considered obese.

What can I do?

The most important thing you can do is eat well and exercise. For instance:

- Daily physical activity is important to your overall health and fitness, and it helps control your body weight by balancing your caloric intake and expenditure. Effective physical activity requires moderate to intense exercise at least thirty minutes per day, most days of the week. Increasing the intensity or the length of your workouts has a variety of health benefits, including weight loss.
- Losing as little as 5 to 15 percent of your total body weight can reduce your risk factors for these problems, especially heart disease. They can also lower your blood pressure, and decrease blood sugar and cholesterol levels.



Overweight vs. Obese...

Overweight and obesity are both labels for ranges of weight that are greater than what is generally considered healthy for a given height. The terms also identify ranges of weight that have been shown to increase the likelihood of certain diseases and other health problems. For adults, overweight and obesity ranges are determined by using weight and height to calculate a number called the "body mass index" (BMI).