

## HOW DOES ONE DETERMINE BEING OVERWEIGHT OR OBESE?

Both *overweight* and *obese* are labels for ranges of weight that are generally higher than what is considered healthy for a given height. The labels are also terms used to identify ranges of weight that are also related to particular health problems and disease.<sup>1</sup>

## WHAT CAUSES OBESITY?

There are many factors that play a role in obesity which makes it a complex health issue to address. Body weight is a result of genetics, metabolism, behavior, environment, culture, and socioeconomic status. However, being overweight or obese is mostly a result of imbalanced energy (eating too many calories + not enough exercise). Behavior and environment are the biggest culprits of this.<sup>2</sup>

## HOW MANY AMERICANS ARE OVERWEIGHT OR OBESE?

The United States statistics of obesity and overweight individuals has grown astronomically over the last 30 years. More than two-thirds, or 68 percent, of Americans are overweight or obese.<sup>3</sup> In fact, it is the most prevalent of all countries and is the world's leader of obesity. While no state had an obesity rate above 15 percent in 1980<sup>4</sup>, the average rate in 2008 was 34 percent<sup>5</sup> with more than two-thirds of states having an obesity rate above 25 percent. The highest obesity rates, and well above 30 percent are in the south: Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and West Virginia. Six of these 8 states also have the highest rate of hypertension, diabetes, and physical inactivity.<sup>6</sup>



OVERWEIGHT & OBESITY

Ethnicity and socioeconomic class seem to have a strong correlation with obesity. Blacks and Latinos have the highest rates – more than Whites,<sup>7/8</sup> and individuals who earn 350 percent more than those within poverty levels are less likely to be obese.<sup>9</sup> Also, those who did not graduate high school have higher obesity rates.<sup>10</sup>

According to the most recent national Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), the United States' current overweight and obesity trends in adults are as follow: Two of three adults are overweight while one of three is obese.<sup>11</sup>

The *Journal of American Medical Association* also reports the high trend in American children for being overweight and obese. One of six children (ages 2 to 19) is overweight while one of three children is obese.<sup>12</sup>

These current trends show that obesity levels have increased tremendously over the last few decades. Since 1980, obesity rates have doubled for adults. Since 1970, obesity rates have quadrupled for small children (ages 6 to 11) and tripled for older children (ages 12 to 19).<sup>13/14</sup>

# FACTS

## OVERWEIGHT & OBESITY

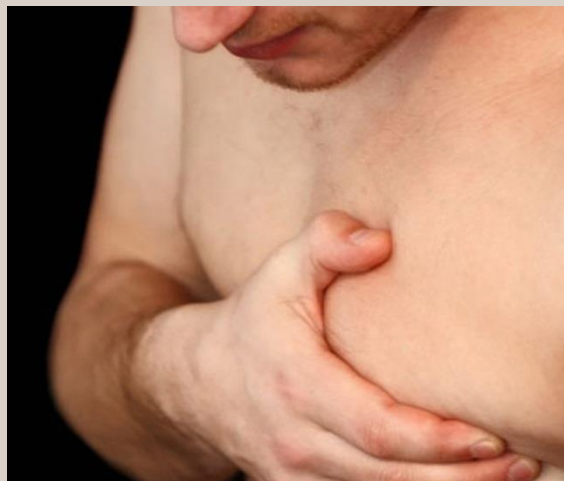
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### WHAT HEALTH PROBLEMS ARE ASSOCIATED WITH BEING OVERWEIGHT OR OBESE?

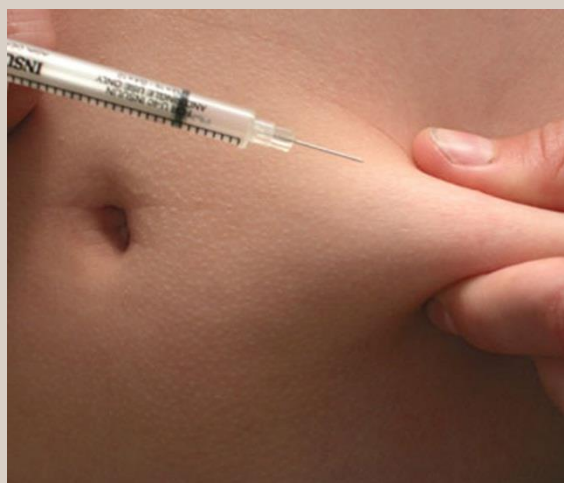
Unfortunately, there are a host of health problems and diseases that are caused from being overweight or obese. According to the Trust for America's Health, obesity is related to more than 20 major chronic diseases.<sup>15</sup> Following are just a few of the increased risks identified by the United States Department of Health and Human Services agency.

- Premature Death<sup>16</sup>
- Heart Disease<sup>17</sup>
- Cancer<sup>18</sup>
- Diabetes<sup>19</sup>
- Kidney Disease<sup>20</sup>
- Reproductive Complications<sup>21</sup>
- Arthritis<sup>22</sup>
- Breathing Problems<sup>23</sup>
- Neurologic and Psychiatric Disease<sup>24/25</sup>

“According to the Trust for America's Health, obesity is related to more than 20 major chronic diseases.”



OBEISITY & HEART DISEASE



OBEISITY & DIABETES



OBESITY ECONOMIC COSTS

## WHAT ARE THE ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF OBESITY?

The United States has undertaken a huge hit with the economic consequences with its overweight and obesity problems. The total annual healthcare cost of obesity alone was estimated at \$147 billion in 2008<sup>26</sup> and it is estimated to go up as high as \$344 billion by 2018.<sup>27</sup> The majority of spending is generated from treating obesity related diseases such as diabetes which totals 11 percent of all healthcare costs.<sup>28</sup> Obese people spend 42 percent more on healthcare than healthy weight people.<sup>29</sup>

In addition to healthcare costs, obesity is costing employers approximately \$4.3 billion annually just in absenteeism.<sup>30</sup> Lower productivity (presenteeism), medical claim costs, and indemnity claim costs also cost employers. While absenteeism alone contributes up to half of the total costs of obese employees, presenteeism costs employers \$506 per year for each obese employee.<sup>31</sup>

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# FACTS

## OVERWEIGHT & OBESITY

Food can be used as a poison or a prescription. Why not use it as a prescription for good health?



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