

What is Obesity

NAASO, The Obesity Society

Obesity is the excessive accumulation of adipose tissue to an extent that health is impaired.(1) Obesity is usually determined using the body mass index or BMI. The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) Obesity Education Initiative Expert Panel developed guidelines for identification, assessment and treatment of obesity.(2) (See the [Practical Guide](#): Identification Evaluation and Treatment of Overweight and Obesity in Adults)

Check your BMI

Body Mass Index (BMI) is the standard measurement of choice for many health professionals. BMI is based on a weight-to-height ratio. Overweight is defined as a BMI ≥ 25 and < 30 kg/m². Obesity is defined as a BMI ≥ 30 kg/m². Obesity correlates strongly with obesity related co-morbid conditions and mortality. To check your BMI click here. <http://www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi/>

Waist Circumference

Waist circumference is another widely used measurement to determine abdominal fat content. An excess of abdominal fat, when out of proportion to total body fat, is considered a predictor of risk factors related to obesity. Men with a waist measurement exceeding 40 inches are considered at risk. Women are at risk with a waist measurement of 35 inches or greater.

Several Health Risks and Conditions Associated with Obesity Include:

[Diabetes](#)

Heart Disease

Stroke

Hypertension

[Some types of Cancer](#)

Sleep Apnea

Osteoarthritis

Gallbladder Disease

Obesity - an Epidemic

Overweight and obesity has reached epidemic proportions in the United States, as well as worldwide.(3) Data collected by the National Center for Health Statistics indicate that the prevalence of obesity, defined as a body mass index > 30 kg/m² has increased from 12.8% in 1976-1980 to 22.5% in 1988-1994 and 30% in 1999-2000. 4) Roughly 31% of American adults meet the criterion for obesity - about 59 million American adults. More than 64% of the US adult population have a BMI ≥ 25 kg/m².(4) In an effort to increase public awareness of the epidemic proportion of obesity, the Surgeon General has issued a call to action to prevent and treat overweight and obesity and their associated health complications.(5)

References:

1. LJ Aronne, KR, Segal, (2002) Adiposity and fat distribution outcome measures: Assessment and clinical implications, *Obes. Res*, 10: 14S-21S
2. National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (1998) Clinical Guidelines on the Identification, Evaluation and Treatment of Overweight and Obesity in Adults - The Evidence Report, *Obesity Research*, 6 (2) Sept. 1998
3. World Health Organization, (1998) Obesity: Preventing and managing the global epidemic, Report of WHO Consultation on Obesity, Geneva, 3-5 June, 1997, WHO, 1998.
4. National Center for Health Statistics (1999) (2000) Prevalence of overweight and obesity among adults.
5. US Department of Health and Human Services. The Surgeon General's call to action to prevent and decrease overweight and obesity. [Rockville, MD] US Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Office of the Surgeon General (2001).