

# The Impact of **EXCESS WEIGHT & OBESITY** on your bones, joints and health.

Obesity can affect the quality of life through limited mobility and decreased physical endurance. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, more than 65 percent of adults in the United States are overweight or obese and it is one of the leading preventable causes of death worldwide. According to the Surgeon General, in the United States approximately 300,000 deaths a year are linked with obesity.

## Obesity and Joints

Joints carry the weight of the body. Added weight makes joints painful and more difficult to work properly. It is not possible to reverse the damage to ones joints, however research shows that even modest weight loss can have a positive effect on the joints, for example, symptoms of arthritis can improve with weight loss. According to one study, a weight loss of eleven pounds decreased arthritis by 50%.

People who are characterized as obese generally have a Body Mass Index (BMI) over 30. The higher a person's BMI is above 25, the greater their weight-related health risks. "Overweight" refers to an excessive amount of body weight that includes muscle, bone, fat, and water. "Obesity" specifically refers to an excessive amount of body fat.

## Check your Body Mass Index (BMI)

Multiply your weight in pounds X 703 and divide that amount by your height in inches squared:

$$\frac{(\text{weight in pounds}) \times 703}{(\text{Height in inches}) \times (\text{height in inches})} = \text{BMI}$$

BMI	Classification
less than 18.5	underweight
18.5-24.9	normal weight
25.0-29.9	overweight
30.0-34.9	class I obesity
35.0-39.9	class II obesity
over 40.0	class III obesity

## Health Consequences of Obesity include:

- ✓ Hypertension (high blood pressure)
- ✓ Osteoarthritis (a degeneration of cartilage and its underlying bone within a joint)
- ✓ Dyslipidemia (for example, high total cholesterol or high levels of triglycerides)
- ✓ Type 2 diabetes
- ✓ Coronary heart disease
- ✓ Stroke
- ✓ Gallbladder disease
- ✓ Sleep apnea and respiratory problems
- ✓ Some cancers (endometrial, breast, and colon)

(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

# How you can prevent or reduce obesity

Because it increases the load on your joints, obesity can aggravate bone and joint conditions such as back pain and knee problems. Regular exercise can improve the symptoms of these conditions by increasing muscle strength and flexibility. Combined with more healthful eating habits, increased physical activity can reduce body fat.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services suggests the following to help prevent or reduce obesity:

- ✓ Learn to choose sensible portions of nutritious meals that are lower in fat.
- ✓ Learn to recognize and control environmental cues (like inviting smells or a package of cookies on the counter) that make you want to eat when you are not hungry.
- ✓ Engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity (like brisk walking) on most, preferably all, days of the week.

- ✓ Take a walk instead of watching television.
- ✓ Eat meals and snacks at a table, not in front of the TV.
- ✓ Keep records of your food intake and physical activity.

To lose weight, more calories must be burned than are consumed. Caloric intake should be reduced by 500-1000 calories per day to lose 1 to 2 pounds per week. To keep the weight off, focus on changing on-going lifestyles and include daily eating and exercise habits.

There's good news! Studies report that those who have maintained a significant weight loss had improvements in not only their physical health, but also their energy levels, physical mobility, general mood, and self-confidence. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

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## You CAN activate yourself\*

1. You don't need special skills or training to be physically active. Walking is a great way to be active.
2. Physical activity should be initiated slowly, and the intensity increased gradually (e.g., start with a 10-minute walk three times a week and work your way up to 30 minutes of brisk walking or other form of moderate activity five times a week).
3. Activities can be split into several short periods (e.g., 10 minutes 3 times a day) instead of one longer period (e.g., 30 minutes once a day).
4. You should select activities that you ENJOY and can fit into your daily life.
5. It may take time to incorporate more activity into your daily life. Don't get discouraged if at first you miss a day or two; just keep trying and do your best to make it a regular part of your life. You will soon realize how good it feels to be physically active and fit.

6. Ask for support from friends and family; likewise, support the people in your life who are trying to be physically active.
7. Many forms of physical activity can be social, allowing you to converse and spend time with family or friends or to develop new relationships.
8. Make fitness a priority ... COMMIT TO IT.

\* Consult with your health care provider before starting a vigorous exercise program if you have ever had heart trouble or high blood pressure or suffer from chest pains, dizziness or fainting, arthritis, or if you are over age 40 (men) or 50 (women).

- Information provided by the office of U.S. Surgeon General

## Other Low Impact Activities

Pilates  
Water Aerobics  
Swimming  
Cycling  
Weight Machines  
Walking