

Overweight and Obesity: At a Glance

THE FACTS ABOUT OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY

- 61% of adults in the United States were overweight or obese (BMI \geq 25)* in 1999.
- 13% of children aged 6 to 11 years and 14% of adolescents aged 12 to 19 years were overweight* in 1999. This prevalence has nearly tripled for adolescents in the past 2 decades.
- The increases in overweight and obesity cut across all ages, racial and ethnic groups, and both genders.
- 300,000 deaths each year in the United States are associated with obesity.
- Overweight and obesity are associated with heart disease, certain types of cancer, type 2 diabetes, stroke, arthritis, breathing problems, and psychological disorders, such as depression.
- The economic cost of obesity in the United States was about \$117 billion in 2000.

HEALTH DISPARITIES

Based on national survey data collected between 1988 and 1994:

- The prevalence of overweight and obesity increases until about age 60, after which it begins to decline.
- In women, overweight and obesity are higher among members of racial and ethnic minority populations than in non-Hispanic white women.
- In men, Mexican Americans have a higher prevalence of overweight and obesity than non-Hispanic whites or non-Hispanic blacks. The prevalence of overweight and obesity in non-Hispanic white men is greater than in non-Hispanic black men.
- 69% of non-Hispanic black women are overweight or obese compared to 58% of non-Hispanic black men.
- 62% of non-Hispanic white men are overweight or obese compared to 47% of non-Hispanic white women. However, when looking at obesity alone (BMI \geq 30)*, slightly more non-Hispanic white women are obese compared to non-Hispanic white men (23%; 21%).
- For all racial and ethnic groups combined, women of lower socioeconomic status (income \leq 130 percent of poverty threshold) are approximately 50% more likely to be obese than those of higher socioeconomic status.
- Mexican American boys tend to have a higher prevalence of overweight than non-Hispanic black or non-Hispanic white boys.
- Non-Hispanic black girls tend to have a higher prevalence of overweight than Mexican American or non-Hispanic white girls.
- Non-Hispanic white adolescents from lower income families experience a greater prevalence of overweight than those from higher income families.

CAUSES OF OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY

- Overweight and obesity result from an imbalance involving excessive calorie consumption and/or inadequate physical activity.
- For each individual, body weight is the result of a combination of genetic, metabolic, behavioral, environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic influences.
- Behavioral and environmental factors are large contributors to overweight and obesity and provide the greatest opportunity for actions and interventions designed for prevention and treatment.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND INACTIVITY

- It is recommended that Americans accumulate at least 30 minutes (adults) or 60 minutes (children) of moderate physical activity most days of the week. More may be needed to prevent weight gain, to lose weight, or to maintain weight loss.
- Less than 1/3 of adults engage in the recommended amounts of physical activity.
- Many people live sedentary lives; in fact, 40% of adults in the United States do not participate in any leisure time physical activity.
- 43% of adolescents watch more than 2 hours of television each day.
- Physical activity is important in preventing and treating overweight and obesity and is extremely helpful in maintaining weight loss, especially when combined with healthy eating.

*Please see fact sheet "Measuring Overweight and Obesity" for a definition of Body Mass Index (BMI).