

Conquering the Battle of the Bulge

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In 18 years, 42% of all American adults will be obese and 11% will be morbidly obese according to the Centers for Disease and Prevention (CDC). That is unless Americans promote healthy change in themselves and their communities.

Obesity is defined as having a body mass index (BMI) greater than 29.9 and morbid obesity is defined as having a BMI greater than 39.9. Currently, 36% of all American adults are obese and more than 6% are morbidly obese. In every state, at least 20% of adults are obese. In 12 states, to include Missouri, more than 30% of adults are obese. It is estimated that more than 72 million adults are obese. This report focuses only on obesity and not both overweight and obesity. Currently more than two-thirds (67%) of American adults are either overweight or obese.

Obesity can lead to significant detrimental consequences in an individual's personal life as well as the American economy. Obesity increases one's risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, liver disease, arthritis, sleep apnea, and many types of cancers. Women who are obese may experience complications with fertility. All these health concerns can have a profound impact on medical costs. The CDC reports that \$147 billion was spent in 2010 on obesity-related medical costs (roughly 20% of all medical costs) in the United States. Individuals who are obese spend an average \$1,429 more on medical bills than those who are at a healthy weight.

By taking a few steps at both the individual and community levels, the trend of obesity in American can be reduced.

Individual change

- **Aim for 60 minutes of moderate physical activity most days a week.** Activity can either be programmed (e.g. lifting weights at the gym) or recreational (e.g. walking the dog). Daily activity does not have to be performed altogether; being active for as little as 10 minutes at a time throughout the day can have a huge impact. If you are not currently active for 60 minutes throughout the day, start off with a smaller time goal (e.g. 20 minutes day) and slowly build up to 60 minutes.
- **Reduce your intake.** Reduce your portion sizes or daily intake by 500 calories. Men should not eat less than 1500 calories a day and women should not eat less than 1200 calories a day without medical supervision. A good way to find out how many calories you eat is to track your calories. There are many phone apps and online programs that can help and several are free to use.
- **Increase fruit and veggies.** Fruits and veggies are a great way to add bulk to your plate without a lot of calories. They also contain many vitamins and minerals that keep your body healthy.
- **Reach for water.** Aim to drink at least 8 glasses (64 oz) a day. Replacing high calorie and sugary drinks with water is a great way to reduce your daily calories and keep yourself hydrated. If you

don't care for the taste of water, try adding in some lemon or lime juice or a low-calorie drink mix.

- **Be a role model for your kids.** Due to the increase in overweight and obesity in children, many parents may outlive their children. In order to help prevent this, encourage kids to make healthy foods choice and can be active. Provide your children with healthful options and make good nutrition a family lifestyle.

Community change

The CDC's Communities Putting Prevention to Work program and the Institute of Medicine recommend several community-based steps to help control and prevent obesity in America.

- **Advocate for more farmer market's and local produce vendors**
- **Encourage housing communities to have greater access to safe means for physical activity (e.g. add additional street lamps and sidewalks)**
- **Encourage schools to develop nutrition programs that focus on childhood obesity prevention**
- **Create a workplace Obesity Prevention Program (www.cdc.gov/leanworks/)**

Making small gradual changes today, at the individual and community level, can help to reduce and prevent obesity in America.