



Clinical Risk Factors: Weight



Keeping Connecticut Healthy
www.ct.gov/dph

Why is this important?

Being overweight means that you carry more weight for your height than is healthy for you. The more extra weight you carry, the less healthy it is. Only smoking causes more preventable deaths than being overweight or obese.

- ❖ Adult obesity rates doubled in the U.S. between 1980-2004, and continue to rise:
 - Nearly 60% of American adults were either [overweight](#) or [obese](#) in 2007.
 - The fastest-growing segment of overweight adults has been the obese subgroup.
- ❖ Excess weight:
 - increases strain on the heart;
 - raises blood pressure, blood cholesterol and triglyceride levels;
 - worsens conditions such as arthritis;
 - is associated with limitations of activity & feelings of sadness and hopelessness; and,
 - increases the chances of developing four of the leading causes of death in the U.S.: heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke and several cancers.
- ❖ Thirty percent of the increase in health care spending since 1987 is due to increased obesity. Within the next decade, obesity-related diseases that lead to disability could increase the number of people requiring nursing home care by as much as 25%.
- ❖ Each year, taxpayers—regardless of health status—pay half of the nation’s \$93 billion price tag for medical expenses directly attributable to obesity. In Connecticut that translates to \$162 per taxpayer, annually.
- ❖ In 2007, not a single state met the nation’s *Healthy People 2010* objective of reducing adult obesity to 15% or less. In fact, more than 20% of adults were obese in every state except Colorado, and no state saw a decrease in its obesity rate last year.
- ❖ In 1991, not a single state had an obesity rate above 20%.

(See the [Online Resources](#) section for additional information.)

How does this affect me? ¹

Diet, physical inactivity, genetic factors, environment, and health conditions all contribute to high overweight and obesity rates. For adults, a [body mass index](#) (BMI) of 25 or more is considered [overweight](#), and a BMI of 30 or more is considered [obese](#).



Age:

- Overweight and obesity rates tend to increase with age up until around age 65.
- Adults 40-59 years of age are more likely to be obese than younger or older adults.

Sex:

- Over 70% of adult males in CT are either overweight (46.8%) or obese (23.7%).
- Nearly half of adult females in CT are either overweight (28.5%) or obese (19.9%).

Race & ethnicity: obesity and its associated chronic health problems disproportionately affect African American, Hispanic and Native American populations: ²

- In Connecticut, nearly 2 out of 3 black and Hispanic adults are overweight or obese:
 - 64.6% of Hispanic adults are overweight (44.4%), while 20% are obese;
 - 64.5% of black adults are overweight (33.6%), while over 30% are obese;
 - nearly 60% of white adults are overweight (37.1%) or obese (21.8%).
- Recent data show racial disparities in obesity for women, but not for men:
 - 41.5% of black women in the United States are obese, compared to 26.2% of Hispanic women and 19.3% of white women (NHANES data);
 - 29.4% of American Indian/Alaska Native women are obese, compared to 5.8% of Asian women (NHIS data).

Such race/ethnic disparities in obesity were not observed in men.

(See the [Facts & Figures](#) section for additional data.)

¹ Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) 2007 data, unless otherwise noted.

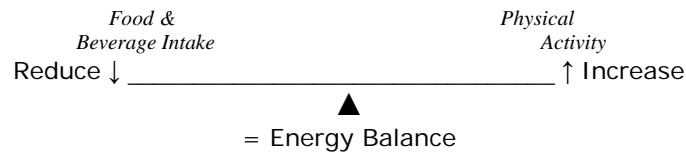
² Asians may exhibit obesity-related health problems at a lower BMI and waist circumference.

Take control!

Balance calories from the foods & beverages you consume with calories you burn off through physical activity.



Your health is in the balance!



↓ Reduce

- ↓ **Portion size.** Eat less – take smaller servings. Focus on eating healthy foods rather than “empty calories”. Learn what triggers your own unhealthy eating behaviors.
- ↓ **Sugar, salt & fat.** Eat fewer processed foods – they usually have added sugar, salt and fat. Learn to read food labels. (See the *Diet* module for more information.)
- ↓ **Sweetened beverages.** Drink fewer sugar-sweetened beverages. The calories in sweetened beverages like fruit drinks and sodas are quickly absorbed – and quickly add weight.
- ↓ **Sedentary activities.** Spend less time in front of the television and computer screen. Avoid eating in front of the screen.
- ↓ **Eating out.** Most of us eat more – and less healthy foods – when we eat out. Limit eating “fast foods”.

↑ Increase

- ↑ **Variety.** Eat a variety of foods. Try different colors, textures and flavors. Try something new each month. Eat breakfast every day.
- ↑ **Fiber.** Foods high in fiber – fruits & vegetables, whole grains, beans, and lentils – help you feel full and more satisfied, and aid in digestion.
- ↑ **Healthy cooking techniques.** Try baking, broiling, roasting or steaming instead of frying foods. Use lemon or herbs and spices instead of gravies and creamy dressings or sauces.
- ↑ **Physical activity.** Gradually increase your activity level. Choose activities the family enjoys and can do together. (See the *Physical Activity* module for more information.)
- ↑ **Breastfeed your child.** Encourage and support breastfeeding to help ensure children’s healthy weight from the start.
- ↑ **Drink more water.**

Note: If you have chronic disease and/or are on medications, **consult a health care provider** prior to trying to lose weight. It is not generally necessary for healthy people to consult a physician before adopting a moderate weight-loss program.

Know Your Goals! ⁴

[Body mass index](#) (BMI) ⁵ is a reliable indicator of total body fat for most people, and is associated with an increased risk of disease and death.

BMI is classified as follows:

Underweight: less than 18.5 kg/m²

Healthy weight: 18.5 – 24.9 kg/m²

Overweight: 25.0 – 29.9 kg/m²

Obese: 30.0 kg/m² or higher



[Waist circumference](#) measures abdominal fat, and is another predictor of your risk for heart disease and other obesity-related diseases.

Risk increases with a waist circumference of over 40 inches for men, and over 35 inches for women.

⁴ National Heart, Lung & Blood Institute / Obesity Education Initiative.

⁵ Body Mass Index = weight in pounds x 703 divided by height in inches squared.

[References:](#) American Heart Association; American Medical Association; American Obesity Association; Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System; Centers for Disease Control & Prevention; Council of State Governments; Institute of Medicine; Kaiser Family Foundation; National Governors Association; National Health & Nutrition Examination Survey; National Heart, Blood & Lung Institute; National Health Information Survey; National Institutes of Health / Weight-control Information Network; Office of the Surgeon General; Partnership to Fight Chronic Disease; Trust for America's Health; United States Department of Agriculture.

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