



Hormones and Obesity

What is obesity?

Obesity is a chronic medical condition characterized by too much body fat. Obesity is diagnosed by a number called the Body Mass Index (BMI), which calculates the amount of body fat. Your BMI is calculated from your current height and weight. The higher the BMI the more body fat a person has.

BMI	Weight Status
Below 18.5	Underweight
18.5 – 24.9	Normal
25.0 – 29.9	Overweight
30.0 and above	Obese

Source: Centers for Disease Control

Why care about obesity?

Both overweight and obesity can make it more likely that you will develop serious diseases, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, gallstones, high cholesterol, gout, most types of cancer, and even early death. Obesity can also make many other medical conditions more difficult to treat.

What causes obesity?

Obesity is very complex and not just a simple problem of willpower or self-control. In general, it is caused by a combination of eating too much and exercising too little,

and genetics. Overweight or obesity occurs when, over time, the body takes in more calories than it burns. However, some people do gain weight more easily than others.

Obesity can also be caused by a hormonal imbalance, as in hypothyroidism or Cushing's disease, but this is rare. Our understanding of obesity is growing rapidly. For example, we now know that fat cells produce many hormones that play an important role in how much you eat, how much energy you spend and how much you will weigh.

How is obesity treated?

There is no simple solution or a pill to cure obesity but there are effective treatments to help manage the condition. Obesity needs to be managed long-term with a combination of diet, increased activity and lifestyle changes. Some obese patients may also benefit from weight loss medication or even surgery.

Ask your doctor what weight-loss treatment options are best for you. Some people with conditions such as diabetes may need to be monitored while they lose weight. Endocrinologists, specialists in hormones and metabolism, can help assess the cause of your obesity and the possible complications, direct how you should be treated, and prescribe and monitor your medications.

What should I do with this information?

Ask your doctor about your specific weight loss needs and goals. The following lifestyle changes are a good place to start:

- Reduce portions of foods that are high in fat or sugar
- Eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains
- Spend 30 minutes a day in moderate physical activity (e.g., brisk walking)
- Eat three meals every day, including breakfast
- Find opportunities to be more physically active (e.g., take the stairs whenever possible, park your car farther out in the parking lot, etc.)

Don't expect overnight results. There are no quick fixes. Aim for a 5–10% weight reduction to start. Weight loss takes time and changes in diet and activity will need to continue for the rest of your life.

Resources

Find-an-Endocrinologist:

www.hormone.org or call

1-800-HORMONE (1-800-467-6663)

To calculate your BMI:

www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/bmi/calc-bmi.htm

American Diabetes Association:

<http://diabetes.org/homepage.jsp>

American Dietetic Association:

www.eatright.org/Public/

Weight-control Information Network:

www.niddk.nih.gov/health/nutrit/win.htm