



## why are we facing more obesity related problems?

- we are eating more food
- we are eating foods that don't provide many nutrients
- we are less active

Other reasons for weight gain and obesity are certain medications (e.g. steroids and some anti-depressants), and medical problems like an inactive thyroid.

## are you overweight?

- 1) Body Mass Index (BMI) - this is calculated by dividing the weight (kg) by square of height (m). It is used to estimate body fat and health risks. A BMI between 18.5–24.9 is healthy weight range, 25–29.9 is considered overweight and > 30 is considered obese.
- 2) Waist measurement – a person is considered to have central obesity if most of the fat is around the waist. Central obesity increases the risk of heart disease. For women, the waist circumference should be < 88.9cm (35 inches) and for men it should be < 101.6cm (40 inches).

## why lose weight?

The main reason to lose weight is for health, not appearance. The complications associated with being obese are: coronary artery disease, high blood pressure, diabetes mellitus, high cholesterol, stroke, sleep apnoea, osteoarthritis, cancer (uterine, colon, gall bladder, breast, kidney and prostate), fatty liver disease, gall stones, fertility and pregnancy problems and social/emotional consequences. Just a 5–10% weight loss can bring about health improvements.

## weight loss management

The goal is to achieve and maintain a healthier weight. This is usually done through dietary changes, increased activity and behaviour modification. Some people may benefit from prescription medications or weight loss surgery.

## dietary changes

A simple way to lower calorie intake is by eating more plant-based foods – fruits, vegetables and wholegrains. Crash diets are not recommended because they can cut too many calories and nutrients, leading to other health problems.

## increased physical activity

The goal of exercise for weight loss is to burn more calories. One of the best ways is through steady aerobic exercise, such as walking, for more than 30 minutes on most days of the week. If you are obese, unfit and have other health problems, check with your doctor before starting an exercise program.

## behaviour modification

There is more to changing your lifestyle than choosing different foods and increasing exercising. It involves changing your approach to eating and activity, which means changing how you think, feel and act. A behaviour modification program by a trained professional can help you make these lifestyle changes.

## prescription weight-loss medications

Medications are considered when other methods of weight loss have not worked, BMI is > 27 with a presence of medical complications such as diabetes, high blood pressure or sleep apnoea, or when the BMI is > than 30.

Medications work by either suppressing appetite or preventing the absorption of fat in the intestines. They are useful in helping to kick-start a weight loss program. However weight loss is moderate at best, about 5% body weight. Furthermore, when drug treatment is stopped, much or all of the excess weight returns.

## weight-loss surgery

When all other methods are unsuccessful, when BMI is > 40, or lower when there is a serious weight-related health problem, this can be managed by a surgeon specialising in gastric banding and intra-gastric balloon procedures.