Obesity and Its Impact on Health

Obesity is a major health problem in the U.S. and all over the world. It affects nearly 2 out of 5 U.S. adults.

What is obesity?

Obesity is a term used to describe a body weight that is above a normal weight for a specific height. Obesity is measured by using BMI (body mass index). BMI is a formula that uses a person's weight divided by their height. BMI may be used to screen for weight problems but it's important to know that BMI does not diagnose health problems or a person's body fat. A high BMI number can mean high body fat. A BMI between 18.5 and 25 is normal. A BMI between 25 and 30 falls within the overweight range. A BMI 30 or higher is within the obese range. A BMI of 40 or more is considered extreme or severe obesity.

Why is obesity a problem?

Carrying too much weight can increase your risk for many serious health issues. These include problems with your heart, lungs, blood vessels, brain, and joints. Some of the problems that can happen include:

- Heart and circulation problems. These include heart disease, high blood pressure, heart rhythm problems (atrial fibrillation), and stroke.

- Type 2 diabetes

- Certain cancers, such as colon and breast cancer

- Sleep apnea and other breathing problems.

- Back or joint problems, such as osteoarthritis and gout

- Digestive tract problems, such as gallstones and GERD (gastroesophageal reflux disease)

- Depression (with severe obesity)

Carrying too much weight can also affect your quality of life. And it can keep you from doing things you want or need to do.

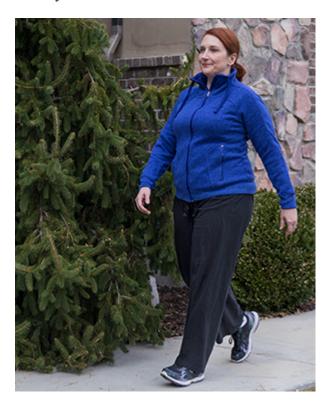## How can you lower your risk for problems?

The key to lowering your risk for health problems from obesity is to manage your weight. If you are overweight or obese, the first step is to lose weight. Studies show that losing as little as 5% of your body weight is good for your health.

An important part of losing weight involves developing health habits and behaviors. Here are some tips:

- Control how much you eat. Food is your body's way to get energy (calories). You'll gain weight if you take in more calories than your body uses. Know your eating habits and keep your portions reasonable.

- Make healthy eating choices. Choose foods with many nutrients that give your body the energy it needs without adding extra pounds. Also limit foods with added sugar and fats.

- Be more active. Exercise burns calories. This can help you manage your weight. Increase your daily movement. You can do this by walking daily, adding aerobic activity. Consider including strength training.

- Talk with your healthcare provider. Ask about working with a dietitian, health coach, exercise physiologist, or mental health provider. They can support and encourage you.

Your healthcare provider may suggest medicines to help you if you have trouble losing weight. Weight loss (bariatric) surgery may also be a choice for adults who have:

- A BMI of 40 or more, or who are more than 100 pounds overweight

- A BMI of 35 to less than 40 and a serious health problem, such as type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, or sleep apnea.

- Not been able to stay at a healthy weight for a period of time. This is in spite of efforts to lose weight through diet, exercise, or medicines.