

Health Risks Associated With Being Overweight Or Obese

By: Dr. Kenneth S. Ross DC, JD

There is a saying: $\frac{1}{4}$ of what we eat keeps us alive and $\frac{3}{4}$ of what we eat keeps your doctor alive.

Today over 60% of Americans are overweight or obese. Obesity is considered as having a Body Mass Index of over 30. Since 1980, obesity in adults over 20 has doubled and almost 20% of our children are overweight or obese. Obesity is the second leading cause of preventable death in the US only second to smoking. It is expected to surpass smoking by 2103 as the leading cause of preventable death.

Chronic diseases, associated with cardiovascular (heart attack and stroke), cancer (some types) and diabetes are all major leading causes of death in this country. In addition hypertension (high blood pressure), gallbladder disease, osteoporosis and sleep problems are also associated with obesity. This is only a partial list of medical complications of obesity.

Being overweight or obese can cause a variety of pain syndromes in different areas of the body, in particular the lower back, which is the leading cause of musculoskeletal symptoms. The highest regions of the country for obesity are in the south, southeast, and the mid-western areas of the United States.

Good nutrition and optimum weight affects everything in our lives and allows us to enjoy a good quality of life. Combined with exercise, you can see a dramatic increase in your health and decrease of chronic diseases associated with obesity.

In order to lose weight a lifestyle change must be undertaken. Simply going on a diet without having the essential knowledge is doomed to fail. Permanent weight loss is determined by **proper nutrition and food choices, proper exercise and physical activity, and lifestyle changes**, which is the single most important. Lifestyle change is cheap, simple, safe, effective and can reverse chronic diseases or a reduction in medication if done correctly.

There are many areas involved in weight loss, including protein intake, cleansing, water consumption, eating properly to keep your metabolism up to burn fat, fiber intake, exercise and stress all play a role in a successful weight loss program.

Protein intake is an essential element in any weight loss program. Adequate intake of protein sends a message to the brain to decrease hunger, and raises your resting metabolism rate, which is necessary to burn fat. Females need about 75 grams of protein daily and men about 125 grams of protein daily. Without optimal metabolism, your body store excess calories as fat. Proper metabolism is very important in losing weight because as we age our body loses 20% of your metabolic rate each decade after 25; the result is you become weaker and heavier. To keep protein at a level to burn excess fat you need to eat 3-5 small meals per day that are rich in protein, complex carbohydrates and eat fewer calories.

Not eating properly or a decrease your calories to lose weight is not the answer. Decreasing calories puts your body into a survival mode. In this stage you do not conserve energy, you retain water, your metabolism decreases, you store more fat and your muscle begins to break down.

You can boost your metabolism in several ways:

1. Eat 4-5 small meal per day rich in protein and complex carbohydrate (fruits, vegetables and grains). This gives you a steady flow of energy.
2. Eat breakfast as this kick starts your metabolism
3. Eat spicy foods if you can tolerate them as they increase your metabolism
4. Get a good night sleep 7-8 hours
5. Drink green tea, which aids to increase metabolism
6. B-complex vitamins aid in breaking down protein, fats and carbohydrates

Exercise is not **essential** in losing weight, but will be needed to maintain and tone muscle. Eventually you will need to incorporate into an overall weight loss, and maintenance program.

Getting fit is essential to your overall health in allowing you to do the things you want to do for the rest of your life. As a physician, I am concerned about the growing problem of obesity in this country. We all need to address this growing problem, which is expected to get worse.

Dr Ross is a practicing chiropractic physician in Altamonte Springs and has extensive experience in nutrition, weight loss and exercise. He has written several books on these subjects, which can be found at www.drkross.com. If you have any questions feel free to contact us at 407-875-2000.