



## Obesity

---

You have been diagnosed with obesity. Obesity is a medical condition that occurs in individuals who are overweight for their height. Obesity is generally an accumulation of excessive body fat. It can be affected by genetics, or by overconsumption of calories compared to energy spent. However, many individuals who are obese do NOT over eat.

If you are overweight, you join 61% of Americans who share this same diagnosis. Therefore, you are the majority, not the minority. Although Obesity carries a social stigma as promoted by advertisers for markets such as fashion, fun, and physical beauty, the only real reason to manage obesity is for its impact on the health of the individual. Obesity contributes directly to high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, hormonal problems, infertility, complicated pregnancy, fetal (unborn baby) abnormalities, and even mental disorders such as depression and anxiety. The obese individual who loses even 10% of the body's fat can help manage these disease states in a positively significant way.

**Many people wonder how they develop obesity even if they are not over eating.**

Obesity is a life long process. Early in life, when the metabolism is not altered, many American individuals eat diets that are high in fats and carbohydrates, and in turn, high in calories. Small yearly gains add up to larger gains over the lifespan. Lifestyle changes such as pregnancy, childrearing, long work hours, evening television watching, fewer hours of activity, snacking, social eating, and alcohol consumption contributes to further gains, and slower metabolism.

Many women who have gained excessive weight respond to this weight gain by dieting to lose weight. They diet by eating less than they should, which, in turn can slow the metabolism, and eventually lead to long term weight gain instead of loss. **\*\*Read the office article called [“Are you a Horse or are you A Bear?”](#) to find out more about this topic.**

## **What happens in the body of an obese person?**

Body fat is a special type of tissue. It is responsible for storing certain types of hormones, and it also is required to dissolve certain vitamins. It is needed to cushion certain body parts, too. Without body fat, we would be very uncomfortable every time we sat down! Without body fat, we would not be able use vitamin D and our bones would all become very brittle! Without body fat, our estrogen levels would be extra low once we entered into menopause!

But when there is too much body fat, some other things happen that shouldn't.... extra body fat puts extra weight on the body. This tends to work out the heart muscle harder than it should have to work. This can cause heart problems in the individual. Extra fatty tissue also requires a blood supply to live; and these extra blood vessels that wouldn't normally be needed, cause the heart to have to pump with higher pressures. High blood pressure eventually becomes part of the problem.

The extra weight even stresses the bones and joints. Back, hip and knee problems are very common in obese individuals. The good news, is that even a small amount of weight loss can significantly improve painful joints!

### **Treatment of obesity is aimed at helping the individual lose weight.**

Not all individuals lose weight the same way. But one thing in particular DOES work for everybody: Moving more and eating less is the first step in weight management. Remember, though, that eating TOO LITTLE can actually make the problem worse. With this in mind, most individuals should be eating at least 1200 calories – 1500 calories.

The goal is to achieve a BMI (body mass index) of 25 or less. Your BMI is \_\_\_\_\_. Your goal weight is \_\_\_\_\_. You could reach this goal by\_\_\_\_\_.

Special attention should be given to help evaluate for diabetes or thyroid problems. Both diseases can contribute to obesity. You should be tested for these diseases. If you currently have diabetes or a thyroid problem, be sure to take your medicines every day, and keep to your goals of treatment as directed by your health care provider.

There are medications that can be used to help the individual lose weight. Medicines like Adipex, certain antidepressants, and certain migraine medicines, can be used to help speed the metabolism and lower the appetite. Using medicines is only helpful for short term use. Not all people can take these medicines. People with

high blood pressure, or heart disease, generally do not do well on these medicines.

The best way to lose weight is to adhere to a nutritional and exercise program that is specially designed for you. At Darien Women's Health, we have a comprehensive weight loss program that helps people lose 3 pounds per week using methods that are specific to each individual. Ask for more information if you are interested. Many insurance companies help pay for this program.

## **What does healthy eating look like?**

You would probably be surprised to take a look at your eating habits for one week. Ask one of our staff for a "diet diary" and write down everything you eat or drink for one week. You will probably be very surprised to see that you eat poorly, even though you may think that you eat well.

**Are you drinking enough water?** Chances are, you think that you are. But most people have no idea that caffeine drinks such as cokes, tea, and coffee actually take water out of the body. If you want to lose weight, you should be drinking 64 ounces a day of water. Chances are, you don't even drink 16!

**Are you feeding yourself foods or fillers?** There's a huge difference between food for the body – fruits, vegetables, grains, proteins, (which is full of nutrients, vitamins, minerals, fiber, etc) and fillers for the stomach - things we eat that aren't nutritionally beneficial in any way; like candies, cookies, cakes and chips. Filler foods don't contribute much to nutrition. Unfortunately, they DO contribute to obesity. If you eat to fill your stomach, but forget to put food into the body, obesity will continue to be a problem for you.

## **What are some first steps to take to lose weight?**

Weight loss is not the same for everyone, but here are a few "quick start" tips to losing weight:

1. Let others around you know that you are going to lose weight. Ask them to NOT offer you foods that are not on your diet. Set a weight loss goal and stick to it. Forgive setbacks and keep moving forward!
2. Remove "filler food" from your household. Get rid of all the candy, cookies, cakes, pies, chips, ice cream, and other foods that you know are not "real" food.
3. Start drinking 64 ounces of water a day.
4. Start eating 5 small meals a day. Keep your portions the size of a fist or a deck of cards. Allow 2 portions of carbohydrates and one portion of protein at each meal. See our nutritional handouts for more information on this if needed.
5. Move your body! Ask for tips on increasing your exercise efforts. GOOD LUCK and BE HEALTHY!