

Obesity – the silent killer

HEALTH
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The reason obesity is a silent killer is that many years may elapse before its damage is fully evident. Excess weight, particularly its distribution around the midsection, is a sure sign of insulin resistance – the stage immediately preceding the development of diabetes.

The higher blood glucose rises, usually in response to the glycemic index of the foods we consume, the more “visceral” fat is stored in the mid-abdomen. Since mid-abdominal obesity is a harbinger of Type II, or “adult-onset”, diabetes, we may further ask why diabetes is so sinister for health and longevity. Over the long term, particularly if poorly controlled, diabetes can lead to renal failure, blindness, heart disease, strokes, and limb-threatening infections. Intriguingly, multiple acclaimed studies in recent years link high blood sugar (“hyperglycaemia”) in general to the formation of “advanced glycaemic end products”, or “AGE” products.

These products, formed between glucose and the proteins in the body, have been hailed as a possible explanation of aging itself – in addition to so many of the long-term effects of diabetes.

Being overweight and obesity are commonly defined using the body mass index (BMI) and measures of waist circumference. A person who has a BMI of equal to or greater than 25 is classified as overweight while someone having a BMI of equal to or greater than 30 is regarded as obese.

A high-risk waistline puts one at greater risk for developing diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and hypertension. For women, a waist line greater than 80cm and for men greater than 94cm is classified as high risk.

OBESITY KEY FACTS

- 80% of people don't eat enough fruit and vegetables.
- In 2018 more than 1.9 billion adults aged 18 years and older were overweight.
- Overall, about 13% of the world's adult population (11% of men and 15% of women) were classed as obese in 2018.
- In 2018, 39% of adults aged 18 years and over (39% of men and 40% of women) were overweight.

THE DANGERS OF OBESITY

- **Lifestyle diseases:** such as diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, osteoarthritis, sleep apnea and certain cancers
- **Psychosocial Difficulties:** Discrimination, negative self-image, and decreased socialisation.

EXERCISE HELPS COUNTER THE ILL EFFECTS OF OBESITY - EVEN FOR THE SEVERELY OBESE

For people who are overweight or obese, is exercise helpful even if you're not shedding weight? Yes. New data suggests that no matter how much you weigh, including physical activity in your day helps protect your heart.

Physical Activity Protects and strengthens Your Heart and lungs, even if You're Not Dropping Weight.

EXERCISE AND MANAGING OBESITY

Exercise is one of the most important measures in managing obesity. It is commonly added to diet alterations, medications and in severe cases surgical management of obesity.

Apart from reducing weight by decreasing calorie consumption, exercise also improves self-esteem that in turn increases adherence to both diet and physical activity.

Exercise therapy for obesity needs to develop in a planned and monitored program of activities that would suit the needs of the patient best. Exercise should begin slowly and should be increase as functional capacity improves.

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EXERCISE AND BODY FAT DISTRIBUTION

Exercise reduces body weight and affects body fat distribution by promoting regional fat loss especially at the abdomen. This reduces the risk of the diseases associated with upper body fat distribution. In addition, the lost weight is also maintained best with exercise.

EXERCISE AND GLUCOSE METABOLISM

In addition to weight reduction, exercise improves glucose metabolism and reduces fasting blood glucose, fasting blood insulin levels, improves glucose tolerance and decreases insulin resistance.

TIPS TO START A WORKOUT ROUTINE WHEN YOU'RE OBESE

- Make sure that before you start working out you have had a check-up (blood pressure, BMI, double check heart rates etc) from your local GP.
- Make sure you have the appropriate gym gear ready and it feels comfortable so you are ready for your session, towel for the sweat and water bottle

BEST WORKOUTS FOR OBESE ADULTS

These programs below are particularly well suited for larger people who exercise. See what interests you and then use the tips to get started on a path to a leaner, fitter you.

1. WALKING

This seems like an obvious choice, but there is a reason that walking tops the list of the best exercise for almost everyone. Walking requires very little equipment and it can be done almost everywhere. Walking is low impact, improves strength and mobility in the lower body, and can be easy, moderate, or vigorous depending on your specific plan.

2. AQUA JOGGING

Water activities are particularly well suited for people who have painful joints or difficulty moving, but lap swimming is too intense for many people and water aerobics classes are not always available. A good alternative is aqua jogging.

Aqua jogging is simply running in the water with the help of a buoyancy belt. You get all the benefits of

running or walking without the impact. You may be able to find a buoyancy belt at the pool where you swim or you can buy one online, then head to the deep end of the pool and begin jogging.

3. GROUP EXERCISE CLASSES

One of the best ways to stick to an exercise program is to develop a social support system. Group exercise classes are a perfect place to find friends, but you'll want to be sure you find a class that meets your needs.

Preview the class by watching it first. Remember that it takes an overweight exerciser more time to move through certain movements, so watch to see if the pace of the class is too fast. Also, watch how the instructor cues the choreography. A good teacher will give plenty of advance warning for movement or direction changes.

4. STRENGTH TRAINING

There are many good reasons to start a strength training program. But for an overweight exerciser, there are special benefits.

Strength training can correct postural issues that may arise from carrying extra weight. Strength training can also increase the range of motion in all your joints. Finally, when you build muscle, you boost your metabolism when your body is at rest.

You can start lifting weights at home, but this is one instance that joining a gym and hiring a trainer is especially helpful. You can use a single session with a personal trainer (in the health hub) to learn simple exercises to get you started and show you technique cues that will help you to keep your form in good shape.

5. RECUMBENT BIKE, CROSS TRAINER, OR PORTABLE PEDDLER

Biking is a great way to burn calories with less impact on your joints. A recumbent bike is a smart choice if you have back pain, joint problems, or simply need more support. There are also recumbent cross trainers on the market, which offer more variety if you get bored pedalling. The machine is like a stepper and lets you work both the upper and lower body with less stress to your joints.

If you don't have the room or the budget for a bike or a cross trainer, consider a portable peddler. These small lightweight devices let you pedal while seated at your desk or in a comfortable chair at home.