



What is Obesity?

Obesity refers to an **excessive amount of body fat**. There is, however, a distinction between being obese and being overweight. Someone who is overweight may benefit from losing a few extra pounds, while an obese person has large amounts of extra body fat that puts them at risk for serious health problems.

Obesity health problems are on the increase annually in the United States. While **obesity** is not considered a diagnosable eating disorder, it has been acknowledged as one of the most dangerous health problems confronting public health professionals today.

Statistically, **obesity** affects as many as 34 percent of American adults, however, what makes this trend anything but normal are the potentially devastating health, social and emotional implications associated with **obesity**.

Although body fat is essential for storing energy, insulating the body and protecting important body organs, excessive amounts can lead to serious **obesity health problems** and increased mortality rates.

Health Consequences of Obesity

An estimated 300,000 deaths per year in the U.S have been attributed to **obesity**. Even a moderate amount of excess fat (especially around the abdominal area) has been linked to increased mortality rates. People **suffering from obesity** are more likely than others to suffer from medical complications. **Obesity health problems** include:

- Heart disease
- High blood pressure
- Type 2 diabetes
- Elevated cholesterol levels
- Decreased blood oxygen levels
- Decreased testosterone levels
- Certain cancers including:
 - Breast cancer
 - Colon cancer
 - Endometrial cancer
 - Esophageal cancer
 - Gall bladder cancer
 - Kidney cancer
 - Ovarian cancer
 - Prostate cancer

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- Uterine cancer
- Pancreatic cancer
- Asthma
- Snoring
- Obstructive sleep apnea
- Osteoarthritis
- Cataracts
- Erectile dysfunction
- Impotence
- Loss of libido
- Infertility
- Irregular menstrual cycles
- Pregnancy and birth complications
- Depression
- Incontinence
- Tinnitus
- Liver disease
- Reduced immune system function
- Swollen joints and fluid retention
- Muscular aches and pains
- Mechanical injuries such as sprained ankles, sunken arches, and strain on the knees
- Gout

Psychological and Social Implications of Obesity

While the medical implications are extensive and serious, the **psychological and social consequences of obesity** are just as serious. Obesity often leads to feelings of **depression, anxiety, guilt and poor self-esteem** which in some cases can be even more crippling than the medical concerns. There is a large emotional aspect to obesity and studies have shown that body satisfaction levels are hugely tied in with evaluations of self-worth.

Many obese individuals struggle with disapproval and criticism from both family and strangers and may find the social stigmas of obesity extremely oppressive. They may be discriminated against at job interviews, feel they are disrespected by their physicians and find themselves less inclined to partake in social activities due to feelings of self-consciousness or simply because society has not provided for their needs - public and airline seats are too small, turnstiles too narrow and restaurant booths unaccommodating. These social discriminations often perpetuate a **negative self-image and feelings of isolation**.

Diagnosing Obesity

The most common and accepted measurements used to **diagnose obesity** are the **Body Mass Index (BMI)** and waist circumference measurements. While these measures allow you to put your **weight concerns** into perspective, it is recommended that you make an appointment with a medical health advisor. They will be able to suggest a **weight loss program** tailored to your needs as well as do any necessary tests to screen for weight-related complications.

In addition to these measurements, your doctor will probably ask a number of questions to help confirm a diagnosis and possible **causes of obesity**. You will

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Michele Carelse, Clinical Psychologist



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Michele has had years of experience in the manufacturing and use of natural remedies. In addition, she is a trained Clinical Psychologist and has been incorporating natural remedies into her treatment of patients with depression, anxiety, ADD, ADHD and stress for many years with spectacular results.

probably be asked about your medical history, the age you started gaining weight, family weight and medical history, eating and exercise habits, nicotine and alcohol use, and previous experience with **weight loss** attempts.

Your doctor may also do blood tests to check **thyroid functioning**, along with glucose and cholesterol levels to determine whether any **obesity-related conditions** are present such as diabetes.

Body Mass Index (BMI)

The BMI uses a formula of weight and height in order to measure body fat. Technically speaking this formula calculates the individual's **body weight** divided by the square of their height. The BMI allows you to assess how much an individual's body weight differs from what is normal or expected for a person of his or her height.

The Body Mass Index (BMI) measurements are as follows:

Underweight:	BMI below 18.5
Healthy weight:	BMI between 18.5-24.9
Overweight:	BMI between 25-29.9
Obese:	BMI 30 or higher

Consider consulting your health care practitioner if your BMI is above 25, and especially if it is above 30, so that you can discuss a weight loss program that suits your needs.

Waist Circumference

Waist circumference, measured in inches, is a good indicator of **health concerns related to obesity and excess weight**. People tend to carry their extra pounds in different areas of the body, and some areas tend to be more dangerous than others. Those who carry most of their body fat around the waist or the upper body (apple shaped) tend to be at higher risk for health concerns than those who carry most of their body fat around the hips, thighs and lower body (pear shaped).

Medical experts have noted that people who carry their excess weight predominantly around their abdominal region put more strain on vital internal organs and this increases the risks associated with a number of the serious health conditions relating to **obesity**. For this reason, a simple waist measurement will help determined the severity of your **weight concerns**.

- Waist circumference for women should be below 35 inches.
- Waist circumference for men should be below 40 inches.

If your waist circumference is above the given measurements, you may be at risk for medical complications and should seek professional guidance on **how to lose weight**.

What Causes Obesity?

While there are a number of **causes of obesity**, it is most commonly the result of consuming more calories each day that can be burned for energy. If the body does

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not use the amount of calories it consumes, they are stored as fat and the result is weight gain.

When this ratio of consumed versus expended calories gets out of hand, **obesity** is often the result. This however is a simplified look at the problem, as **obesity** has multiple causes which usually occur in combination.

Factors in Obesity

- Genetics – **Obesity** tends to run in families. This is predominantly due to poor family eating habits, but it also suggests a genetic link. Researchers have found a number of genes that genetically predisposed certain people to **weight-gain and obesity**.
- Metabolism - Some people have a faster metabolism than others, meaning they handle the use of calories better in order to keep up the body temperature and to carry out necessary metabolic processes. As society promotes a slimmer figure, “crash” and “yo-yo” diets are on the increase and studies show that they lead to a **sluggish metabolism** and increased food obsessions.
- Psychological – For some, food becomes tied into emotions and they begin to eat in order to “fill” an emotional void. This **comfort-eating** tends to happen when people need to feel better such as when they are feeling bored, **emotionally low, stressed, sad** or guilty and before long, food becomes psychologically related to these emotions.
- Sociocultural factors – Our society and environments play a large role in how we experience and perceive food. Today’s modern world has resulted in an increase in “quick and easy” meals, fast foods and high energy snacks that lack healthy nutritional value and are high in fat and calories. Think of how we use food in various social events. It’s present at every celebration and at most social gatherings, it serves as a great reward for a job well done, and what were once considered “luxury items” are advertised as every day necessities.
- Sedentary lifestyles – Lack of physical exercise is one of the leading **causes of obesity** and weight gain. Our occupations often require that we sit in front of a computer all day, kids are sitting for hours watching television and playing TV games instead of playing sports and generally people are not exercising enough to burn the calories consumed.
- Medical conditions – There are some medical conditions that can cause **weight gain and obesity**, for example: **Hypothyroidism**; abnormalities or injury to the hypothalamus region in the brain; Cushing's disease and polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS), a common **hormonal disorder in women**.
- Side-effects of certain medication – A number of prescription medications can cause you to gain weight. Some examples include: corticosteroids; certain female hormone treatments including some oral contraceptives; some antidepressants, and other psychoactive drugs, including certain antipsychotics, lithium, and antiseizure agents. Weight gain due to medication is usually temporary and generally does not lead to **obesity** proportions.

Help for Obesity

Ideally our lifestyle should focus on **preventing obesity** with a healthy diet and



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exercise routine. **Preventing obesity** and the ailments that can come along with it can significantly improve your quality of life. If you are currently suffering from **obesity**, you should get treatment as soon as possible. **Obesity** is a serious health ailment that needs to be addressed and treated promptly. There are a number of treatment options including drug therapy, psychotherapy, surgery, lifestyle changes and **natural herbal and homeopathic remedies** and it is important that you weigh up each option before making a decision.

Drug Treatment

There are a number of drug **treatments available to treat obesity**, however, if this treatment option is chosen it is important to realize they are not miracle drugs and need to be taken in combination with a healthy diet and adequate physical activity. In addition, medication will not help resolve the emotional problems surrounding bad eating habits and these need to be addressed. Commonly prescribed medications for **obesity** include

- Orlistat (known as Xenical) which works by blocking approximately 30% of all dietary fat from being absorbed.
- Phentermine which acts as an appetite suppressant
- Sibutramine (known as Meridia) which is also an appetite suppressant and has been approved for long-term use.

If you decide on prescription medication, make sure to have regular check-ups with your health practitioner so that your progress can be monitored and the safety of the drug's use can be checked. All these medications have possible side-effects that should be researched before use.

Psychotherapy

Different forms of psychotherapy have been shown to greatly assist those struggling with **obesity**. Many people hugely under-estimate the role of negative emotions on eating habits and it is not simply enough to address the symptoms without looking at underlying causes.

Cognitive behavioral therapy involves promoting new positive behaviors such as healthy diet and exercise as well as addressing the habitual thoughts that perpetuate the weight-gain cycle. With the help of a psychologist you should soon be able to identify emotional triggers, false beliefs about your self, as well as negative thought patterns which all contribute to poor lifestyle choices.

Surgical Treatment

Surgery as an option for treating **obesity** should be a last resort and is a decision that should not be entered into lightly. Generally, surgery is only recommended as an option when an individual's Body Mass Index exceeds 40 or if the **obesity** occurs along with serious medical conditions.

Two such surgeries include:

- Gastric Bypass (Malabsorptive) Surgery
- Gastric Stapling (Restrictive) Surgery

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Both come with a multitude of complications and it is essential that all the risks are fully understood prior to surgery. The complications that are all too often overlooked are the psychological ones.

Many people go into surgery with the idea that they will feel better about themselves and all their problems will disappear once they are thinner. When this happens the emotional problems that caused **obesity** in the first place are not dealt with and new problems arise.

Lifestyle Changes

Lifestyle changes should be the first treatment option and even if you wish to incorporate other treatments, lifestyle changes should always be included. While changing years of bad habits is not an easy thing to do, think of it as a positive life investment and once good habits are instilled you will wonder how you ever survived without them.

A healthy diet, regular exercise and sufficient rest are all necessary for the natural functioning of all bodily systems and **preventing obesity**. Weight loss is not the only positive difference you should feel after adopting a healthy lifestyle.

Increased energy, clearer skin, decreased mood swings and a more positive attitude are just a few of the side-effects of a healthy lifestyle. The important thing to remember about this treatment option is that it is a gradual process and so be patient and don't expect immediate results!

Natural Herbal Remedies for Obesity

Herbal and homeopathic remedies can offer an **effective natural solution to obesity and weight-gain**. Herbal ingredients such as Garcinia cambogia, Taraxacum officinalis, Glycyrrhiza glabra, and Capsicum minimum can be extremely beneficial in **stimulating the digestive system and boosting the metabolism** while naturally suppressing the appetite.

In addition, the sea vegetable Fucus vesiculosus contains a concentrated source of minerals including iodine, which assists in the **production of thyroid hormones** necessary for maintaining healthy metabolism in all cells of the body.

Homeopathic remedies such as Kalium Phosphate, Calcium Phosphate and Calcium Fluoride also help to **improve metabolism** and the breakdown of dietary fat while reducing the craving for sweet foods. When used regularly, these natural ingredients can help to assist your body in weight loss while also helping **rid your body of harmful toxins**. The result is a slimmer, more energetic and healthier you!

Tips for Eating Healthy

- Set realistic goals for yourself and stick to them. This would include goals for eating and exercising as well as goals for changing your attitude towards food. Try and ease yourself into these changes slowly and be patient with your progress. These goals are your first step to changing your lifestyle into a healthy one. Make your main goal a change of lifestyle – the rest will follow.
- Don't be disheartened if you don't see the results immediately, weight loss is

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- healthiest, and most sustainable, when it is a gradual process.
- Seek professional help in the areas that you are struggling with. If you find that you comfort eat or have unresolved emotional issues tied into your eating habits (which is often the case), consider seeing a licensed psychologist to deal with the root cause of your compulsive eating. If exercising or eating healthy are things you struggle with, seek guidance from a professional trainer, a nutritionist or a support group.
 - Eat the right foods. **Losing weight** is NOT about deprivation and starving oneself! Cut down on foods high in fat and sugar as these are often high in calories and low in essential nutrients, and increase good high-fiber foods such as wholegrain breads, cereals, pasta, rice, legumes, fruits and vegetables. It's also ok to treat yourself once in a while as long as you can do it in moderation.
 - Moderation is one of the keys to healthy eating. Reduce meal portion size gradually so that your stomach can slowly adjust to eating less. Also try eating slower as it takes a while for the stomach to register that it's full – and so often we eat far beyond what our bodies want.
 - Don't skip meals! Aim to eat smaller meals, but more often. Eating every 3 to 4 hours has been shown to reduce food cravings and increase the metabolism.
 - Discover what your emotional food triggers are and find alternative ways to deal with these emotions. Boredom, **stress, depression and fatigue** are common triggers so be sure to only eat when you are hungry.
 - Set regular times for exercising so that it becomes a part of your daily routine. Even if it's only 30 min per day, exercise is essential for **losing weight and maintaining a healthy body**. Start slowly and work your way up to a more rigorous exercise program as your fitness increases. If you start off pushing yourself too hard, you are more likely to hurt yourself and give up, so try make it an enjoyable experience.
 - See every movement as an opportunity as opposed to an inconvenience. Little things like taking the stairs, parking further than you need to, and losing the TV remote are all ways to increase your daily activity.
 - Develop an enjoyment in physical activities. If you absolutely hate gym, then maybe it's just not for you. Activities such as yoga, long walks, regular swims or taking up a sport may be a better option. These activities also provide an opportunity for social interaction which often make exercise more fun and motivating.
 - Do not be discouraged if you slip up with one of your goals or miss a day of activity. Too much guilt is destructive and demotivating and could set you right back if you dwell on it.
 - Reward yourself with something you enjoy (not food) when you make progress with your weight or reach a goal.
 - Be optimistic and develop a positive, empowering attitude! Work on your self-esteem because the better you feel about yourself the more motivated you will be to lose weight.

The Natural Approach

While Western medicine has become the norm in many cultures, it is not the only treatment option. Conventional western medicine, often called allopathic medicine, is the system of medicine taught at most medical schools and most pharmaceutical and synthetic medicines are manufactured and marketed according to the principles of allopathic medicine. Allopathic medicine is also sometimes called orthodox medicine.

Because most of us in the Western world have grown up in a society in which allopathic medicine is the prevailing norm, we forget that, only a few decades ago, homeopathic, herbal and other natural medicines were commonly available – and freely used even by conventional doctors. While there are often heated debates about which system of medicine is ‘better’ than the other, many responsible doctors (whether they are allopathic or not) recognize that both have a role to play in the treatment program.

Natural medicine has often been frowned on by conventional doctors, especially by those who did not have sufficient knowledge of these medicines. However, it is encouraging to note that some medical schools are now beginning to re-introduce it into their course work, thereby providing doctors with a wider range of treatment options from which to choose. In many countries, especially in Europe, India and China, natural and homeopathic medicines are commonly prescribed by conventional doctors and represent a significant part of the total annual drug sales.

Naturopathy is a branch of medicine (just as allopathy is a branch of medicine) which operates according to the underlying philosophy that the body has an innate capacity to heal itself. While natural medicines are often called ‘alternative’ or ‘complimentary’ medicines, they are, in fact, a unique and independent form of medicine in their own right, well able to treat a variety of conditions. Perhaps the term ‘holistic’ medicine is more apt, given the broad range of treatment options and approaches which are to be found within the practice of natural medicine, which encompasses many different disciplines, including herbalism, homeopathy, iridology, osteopathy, chiropractic, therapeutic massage techniques, aromatherapy, acupuncture and many, many more.

Most naturopaths will use a variety of treatment modalities in order to treat their patients in a holistic way to support health, relieve symptoms and prevent future disease. In fact, even the World Health Organization defines health as being "... more than simply the absence of illness. It is the active state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being." This is a wonderfully clear description of holistic or natural medicine, which strives to support health (thereby relieving or preventing symptoms), rather than simply eliminating disease.

Although allopathic medicine certainly has a role to play and has made a tremendous contribution to medical science during the past century, there is a growing perception that it is not the only answer and that, in many cases, holistic medicine can accomplish just as much, if not more – without the risk of side effects, addiction and sacrifice to health so commonly associated with pharmaceutical drugs. Contrary to common perception, and provided that they are manufactured in the correct way, natural medicines can work quickly and safely to promote healing.

In many cases, they can succeed where pharmaceutical drugs have failed. Despite frequent reports that they are ‘unproven’ and ‘untested’, the opposite is true. Natural medicines have a long history of usage and there is a wealth of empirical evidence to support their effectiveness and safety. In addition, active clinical research is carried out by many academic hospitals and universities to support the extensive traditional and empirical evidence behind natural medicines.

It is also important to know that, like any medicine, herbal and homeopathic medicines must be manufactured in the correct way, following acceptable procedures and manufacturing methods to ensure maximum effectiveness and safety. Due to the recent rise in popularity of natural remedies, many companies

have sprung up to take advantage of the market. Unfortunately not all of them are equipped to manufacture to the correct standards, often resulting in a flood of inferior (and sometimes even unsafe) remedies onto the market – giving natural remedies a bad name.

Even some pharmaceutical companies have rushed to claim their market share by producing so-called ‘standardized’ extracts of herbs and offering these as superior to the tried and tested methods of naturopathic manufacturing. Nothing could be further from the truth. While ‘standardized’ extracts may offer benefit of easy consistency of dosage (and cheaper more efficient production lines), they have grave disadvantages. These include an increase in side effects as the medicines produced in this manner lose the natural protective properties of the herbs. In some cases, these side effects have proved fatal – as was seen in the liver toxicity associated with standardized extracts of kava kava, a herb previously safely used for generations without any known side effects.

Most naturopaths recommend what is called the Full Spectrum Method of extraction – which retains the benefits of ALL the active ingredients within the herb as opposed to isolating only one – thereby providing a more complete treatment as well as superior protection against side effects.

Whatever your choice, always choose wisely. Research what is best for you. If you have a chronic or life threatening condition, don’t make changes without first discussing them with your doctor in order that your condition may be monitored. Well informed and supportive practitioners will support patients who want to take responsibility for their own health.

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In combination with a healthy lifestyle and balanced diet, JuniorSlim supports the healthy functioning of the digestive system, thereby helping to maintain optimum performance.

Vital organs in the body that are instrumental in **regulating weight, metabolism and energy** expenditure need systemic harmony to function properly.

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