

SCMA health watch

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Health Tips from South Carolina's Doctors

UNDERSTANDING OBESITY

Obesity is the excess accumulation of body fat. It can be roughly placed in categories such as mildly overweight, moderately overweight or severely overweight. Obesity is the result of too many calories taken in and too few calories burned. This imbalance is usually due to a combination of unhealthy behaviors, environmental factors and genetics.

WHY PEOPLE GAIN WEIGHT

Genetics and the environment may increase the risk of personal weight gain. However, the choices a person makes in eating and physical activity also contribute to obesity. What people eat and their level of physical activity help determine whether they will gain weight.

Some illnesses may lead to obesity or weight gain. Drugs such as steroids and antidepressants may also cause weight gain. A doctor is the best source to tell you whether illnesses, medications, or emotions are contributing to weight gain or making weight loss hard.

UNDERWEIGHT, OVERWEIGHT OR OBESE?

Body Mass Index (BMI) is a number calculated from a person's weight and height. It is an indicator of body fatness and is used to screen for health problems. Because the BMI does not directly measure body fat, some people, such as athletes, may have a BMI that identifies them as overweight even though they do not have excess body fat. BMI ranges for children and teens are defined differently than adults.

Other ways to estimate body fat include measurements of skinfold thickness and waist circumference, underwater weighing, special x-rays, ultrasound, and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI).

CALCULATING BMI

Use this formula to calculate your BMI:
weight (lb) / [height (in)²] x 703 = BMI
Example: Weight = 150, Height = 5'5"
[150 ÷ (65)²] x 703 = 24.96

BMI	Status
Below 18.5	Underweight
18.5 – 25	Normal
25 – 29	Overweight
30 +	Obese

DANGERS OF OBESITY

The American Medical Association classifies obesity as a condition, not a disease. However, obesity contributes to the problems of most illnesses.

Obese people are at an increased risk for many diseases and health conditions, including the following:

- Hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Dyslipidemia (high total cholesterol or high levels of triglycerides)
- Type 2 diabetes
- Coronary heart disease
- Stroke
- Gallbladder disease
- Osteoarthritis (hip and knee problems)
- Sleep apnea or respiratory problems (breathing problems)
- Some cancers (endometrial, breast, and colon)

HOW TO LOSE WEIGHT

Patients should talk to their doctor before beginning any weight-loss program. People who need to lose weight should do so gradually, at a rate of one-half to two pounds per week. The safest and most effective way to lose weight is to reduce calories and increase physical activity. Be active. Eat well. Select sensible portion sizes and a well-balanced diet.

If you eat 100 less food calories a day than you burn, you'll lose about one pound in a month, or 12 pounds in a year.

Did you Know?

- One in four adults in South Carolina is obese.
- Medical expenditures related to obesity in South Carolina exceeded \$1 billion in 2003.
- The obesity rate in SC nearly doubled from 1990 to 2002.

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control

The purpose of the SCMA Health Watch program is to disseminate health information to the citizens of South Carolina and allow them to become more empowered in taking charge of their own health. To subscribe to this free publication please email news@scmanet.org or call 1.800.327.1021 ext.420. Please reproduce and distribute this information. When distributing this information in another format, please credit the South Carolina Medical Association.