

Obesity health risks that are on the rise

We see many obese people around us every day. Some feel worried and sad because they are afraid of future health problems. Others do not worry at all and believe obesity does not cause any serious harm. Both ways of thinking exist. That is why I gathered this information. Not to scare anyone and not to judge anyone, but to explain the health risks of obesity that are increasing and affecting more people every year.

Let's start by understanding overweight and obesity.

Understanding Overweight and Obesity

Overweight and obesity are not only about body size or appearance. They are serious health conditions that increase the risk of many diseases. As obesity becomes more common, the health risks linked to it are also rising. Extra body fat, especially around the waist, puts stress on almost every system in the body.

Fat stored around the belly, often called abdominal obesity, is more harmful than fat stored in other areas. It increases the risk of heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, and other long-term health problems. Obesity is a long-term condition that develops slowly and can last for years if not managed properly. Many people do not notice its harmful effects until health problems begin to appear.

But here is the good part. You do not need to lose a lot of weight to feel better. Your health can improve even by losing a small amount of weight. Just 5 to 10 percent weight loss can help control blood sugar, lower blood pressure, and reduce the risk of serious diseases.

Overweight and obesity are commonly measured using Body Mass Index, or BMI. BMI determines if your weight is healthy based on your height. While BMI is not a perfect tool, it helps identify people who may be at higher risk of obesity-related health problems. Waist size is also important, as a larger waist increases health risks.

- If you have a BMI between 25 and 29.9 then you are considered overweight.
- A BMI of 30 or higher is considered obesity.

Now that we understand what overweight and obesity are, let's begin looking at the health risks of obesity that are on the rise.

1. Type 2 Diabetes

Type 2 diabetes is one of the most common diseases linked to obesity. It happens when the body can't effectively use insulin. Insulin helps move sugar from the blood into the cells for energy. When insulin isn't working properly, your blood sugar level rises. Most people with type 2 diabetes are overweight or obese.

High blood sugar over time can damage:

- Heart
- Blood vessels
- Kidneys
- Eyes
- Nerves

People may experience fatigue, frequent urination, thirst, blurred vision, and slow wound healing.

Losing just 5 to 7 percent of body weight can greatly reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes. For many people, healthy eating and regular physical activity can help delay or even prevent the disease.

2. High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure, also called hypertension, happens when blood flows through the arteries with too much force. Obesity raises blood pressure because the heart has to work harder to pump blood through a larger body. Extra fat can also damage the kidneys, which help control blood pressure.

Many people with high blood pressure do not feel any symptoms, which makes this condition dangerous. Losing weight can help lower blood pressure and may reduce the need for medication in some cases.

High blood pressure increases the risk of:

- Heart attack
- Stroke
- Kidney disease
- Heart failure

3. Heart Disease

Heart disease includes several conditions that affect the heart, such as coronary artery disease, heart attack, heart failure, and irregular heartbeat.

Obesity increases heart disease risk by raising:

- Blood pressure
- Blood sugar
- Bad cholesterol levels

Extra body fat also causes inflammation, which slowly damages blood vessels. Over time, plaque builds up inside the arteries, making them narrow and stiff, and this forces the heart to work harder. Losing excess weight helps the heart work better and reduces strain on it. Even moderate weight loss can lower the risk of heart disease and improve overall heart health.

4. Stroke

A stroke happens when blood flow to the brain is blocked or when a blood vessel bursts. Brain cells start to die in minutes without oxygen.

Obesity increases stroke risk mainly by increasing blood pressure and cholesterol levels. High blood sugar also damages blood vessels, making them more likely to clog or rupture.

Stroke can cause:

- Paralysis
- Speech problems
- Memory loss
- Long-term disability

5. Metabolic Syndrome

Metabolic syndrome is a group of health conditions that happen together and greatly increase the risk of heart disease, diabetes, and stroke. It is closely linked to obesity and a lack of physical activity. Weight loss, healthy eating, and regular movement can help improve or even reverse many of these conditions.

You are diagnosed with metabolic syndrome if you have at least three of the following:

- Large waist size
- High blood pressure
- High blood sugar
- High triglycerides
- Low good cholesterol (HDL)

6. Fatty Liver Disease

Fatty liver disease happens when excess fat has built up in the liver. The most common types are:

- Nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD)
- Nonalcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH)

These conditions can lead to liver inflammation, scarring, cirrhosis, and liver failure. Many people with fatty liver disease have no symptoms at first. As the disease progresses, they may feel fatigue, discomfort, or weakness. Losing 3 to 5 percent of body weight can reduce fat in the liver and improve liver health.

7. Cancer Risk

Obesity increases the risk of developing cancer. Extra body fat changes hormone levels and increases inflammation in the body, which can support cancer growth. People who maintain a healthy weight or avoid gaining excess weight as they get older have a lower risk of developing cancer.

Cancers linked to obesity include:

- Breast cancer
- Colon and rectal cancer
- Endometrial cancer
- Kidney cancer
- Liver cancer
- Pancreatic cancer
- Gallbladder cancer

8. Breathing Problems

Excess weight affects how the lungs work. Fat around the chest and abdomen limits lung expansion and makes breathing harder.

Common breathing problems linked to obesity include:

- Shortness of breath
- Reduced lung capacity
- Poor oxygen levels

9. Sleep Apnea

Sleep apnea is a serious sleep disorder; its when breathing stops and starts while you sleep. Obesity is the leading cause of sleep apnea in adults.

Fat around the neck narrows the airway, causing snoring and breathing pauses. Weight loss can reduce or eliminate sleep apnea in many people.

Sleep apnea leads to:

- Daytime fatigue
- Poor concentration
- Heart disease
- Diabetes

10. Asthma

Asthma is a long-term breathing condition that affects the airways in the lungs. Obesity increases the risk of developing asthma and can make asthma symptoms worse. Extra body weight puts pressure on the lungs and chest, which makes it harder to breathe. Obesity also increases inflammation in the body, and this inflammation can irritate the airways.

People with obesity and asthma may experience more frequent wheezing, coughing, chest tightness, and shortness of breath. They may also find it harder to control asthma symptoms with medication. Losing weight can help improve breathing, reduce inflammation, and make asthma easier to manage.

11. Osteoarthritis

Osteoarthritis is a joint disease that causes limited movement, pain, and stiffness. Obesity is a major risk factor, especially for weight-bearing joints like the knees, hips, and ankles. Extra body weight places constant pressure on these joints, which slowly wears down the cartilage that protects

them. Fat tissue also releases substances that cause inflammation, further damaging the joints.

Losing weight helps reduce stress on the joints and can ease pain. Regular exercise strengthens the muscles around the joints, improves flexibility, and helps people move more comfortably.

12. Gout

Gout is a type of arthritis that happens when crystals made of uric acid build up in the joints. This buildup causes sudden, severe pain, swelling, and redness, most often in the big toe, but it can also affect other joints. Obesity increases the amount of uric acid in the blood, which raises the risk of developing gout.

People with obesity may experience more frequent gout attacks and more severe symptoms. Losing weight can help lower uric acid levels in the body, reduce inflammation, and decrease the number and severity of gout attacks. Maintaining a healthy weight, along with a balanced diet, can make gout easier to manage.

13. Gallbladder and Pancreas Diseases

Obesity increases the risk of gallstones because it raises cholesterol levels in the bile. Gallstones are hard deposits that can block the gallbladder and cause pain, infection, or inflammation. Interestingly, losing weight too quickly can also increase the risk of gallstones, so it's important to lose weight gradually and under medical supervision.

Obesity also raises the risk of pancreatitis, which is a painful inflammation of the pancreas. High levels of fat in the blood can make this condition worse. Maintaining a healthy weight and following a balanced diet can help lower these risks and protect both the gallbladder and pancreas.

14. Kidney Disease

The kidneys are organs that filter waste and extra fluids from the blood. Obesity can harm the kidneys by raising blood pressure and blood sugar levels, both of which strain kidney function. Even in people without diabetes or high blood pressure, obesity alone can damage the kidneys over time.

Losing weight helps reduce this strain, slows the progression of kidney disease, and supports overall kidney health. Maintaining a healthy weight, along with a balanced diet and regular exercise, can protect the kidneys and improve their function.

15. Pregnancy Problems

Obesity during pregnancy can increase health risks for both the mother and the baby. For the mother, risks include gestational diabetes, high blood pressure, preeclampsia, and a higher chance of needing a C-section delivery. For the baby, risks include being born with a high birth weight, experiencing birth complications, and having a higher chance of developing obesity or diabetes later in life.

Achieving a healthy weight before pregnancy and maintaining a balanced lifestyle during pregnancy can improve health outcomes for both mother and baby.

16. Fertility Problems

Obesity can affect fertility in men and women. In women, excess weight can disrupt hormone levels and interfere with ovulation, making it harder to become pregnant. In men, obesity can lower sperm count and reduce sperm quality.

Losing just 5 percent of body weight can help restore hormonal balance, improve ovulation in women, and boost sperm health in men, increasing the chances of pregnancy. Maintaining a

healthy weight through diet and exercise is an important step for couples trying to conceive.

17. Sexual Function Problems

Obesity can affect sexual health in both men and women. In men, it is linked to erectile dysfunction, while in women, it can reduce sexual desire, arousal, or the ability to enjoy sex.

Several factors contribute to these problems, including poor blood flow, hormone imbalances, and low self-confidence. Adopting healthy eating habits, staying physically active, and losing excess weight can improve sexual function, boost confidence, and enhance overall well-being.

18. Mental Health Problems

Obesity can affect mental health just as much as physical health. People with obesity may experience depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, body image issues, and eating disorders.

In addition, they often face stigma and discrimination at work, school, and in social situations, which can make mental health challenges worse. Adopting a healthy lifestyle, including balanced eating, regular physical activity, and weight loss, can improve mood, boost confidence, and support overall emotional well-being.

Why Even Small Weight Loss Matters

Losing weight doesn't have to mean reaching a "perfect" number on the scale. Even a small reduction in body weight can make a big difference for your health. Losing just 5 to 10 percent of your body weight can bring several important benefits:

- **Lower Blood Sugar:** Excess weight makes it harder for the body to control blood sugar. Losing even a small amount

of weight can help the body use insulin more effectively, lowering blood sugar levels and reducing the risk of type 2 diabetes.

- **Reduce Blood Pressure:** Extra body fat forces the heart to work harder, which can raise blood pressure. Losing weight eases this strain, helping to bring blood pressure down and lowering the risk of heart disease and stroke.
- **Improve Cholesterol:** Obesity can raise bad cholesterol (LDL) and lower good cholesterol (HDL), increasing the risk of heart problems. Even modest weight loss can improve cholesterol levels, keeping your heart and blood vessels healthier.
- **Decrease Joint Pain:** Extra weight puts pressure on the knees, hips, and other joints. Losing just a small amount of weight reduces stress on these joints, decreases pain, and can improve mobility and flexibility.
- **Improve Sleep and Energy:** Obesity is linked to sleep problems such as sleep apnea, which causes poor sleep and daytime fatigue. Losing weight can improve breathing during sleep, increase energy, and help you feel more active throughout the day.



Managi

ng Obesity Safely

Treating obesity is not the same for everyone, and it should always be done under the guidance of a healthcare provider to ensure safety. Several approaches can help manage weight effectively:

- **Healthy Eating Habits:** Focus on a balanced diet with plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins. Reducing sugary and high-fat foods helps control calorie intake and supports weight loss.
- **Regular Physical Activity:** Exercise helps burn calories, strengthens muscles, and improves heart health. Even moderate activities like walking, cycling, or swimming can make a difference when done consistently.
- **Behavior Changes:** Changing daily habits, like eating mindfully, tracking food intake, and avoiding emotional eating, can support long-term weight management.
- **Medical Support:** Healthcare providers can monitor progress, provide guidance, and offer resources such as dietitians or weight management programs.
- **Medications:** In some cases, prescription medications may

help reduce appetite or fat absorption. These medications should only be used under a Medical Professional supervision.

- **Weight-Loss Surgery:** For severe obesity, surgery may be recommended to help reduce stomach size or limit calorie absorption. This option requires careful evaluation and lifelong lifestyle changes afterward.

Final Thoughts

Obesity is a serious health condition that can affect almost every system in the body, increasing the risk of diseases like diabetes, heart problems, and joint issues. But it is not unmanageable. Even modest weight loss can greatly improve health and quality of life.

Daily healthy choices, like eating better, staying active, and developing positive habits, can protect your health and boost overall well-being. Everyone's journey is unique to them, and progress can take time. With proper support, patience, and consistency, better health is achievable.

Every small step forward matters and contributes to long-term success!