

Fast Facts: Obesity-Related Chronic Disease

Obesity is associated with significantly increased risk of more than 20 chronic diseases and health conditions that cause devastating consequences and increased mortality. Beyond the significant personal toll, obesity and related health complications are driving up health care costs and threatening employers' bottom lines. This fact sheet is one in a series of 'Fast Facts' that provides information to help shed light on this complex health issue.

- The risks of many medical complications grow with increasing Body Mass Index (BMI) and abdominal obesity. Obesity is a risk factor for a variety of chronic conditions including diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol, stroke, heart disease, certain cancers and arthritis.ⁱ
 - Overweight and obesity are clearly associated with increased risks for certain types of cancer, including kidney, endometrial, colorectal, gallbladder and postmenopausal breast cancer.ⁱⁱ
- In the Framingham Offspring Study, obesity was responsible for 78 percent of cases of hypertension in men and 64 percent in women.ⁱⁱⁱ
- High waist circumference has been shown to increase risk of death by 35 percent compared to normal waist circumference.^{iv}
- The well-known Nurses Health Study of more than 44,000 women found high waist circumference resulted in a two-fold increase in coronary heart disease.^v

Diabetes and Obesity

- People who are obese are at an increased risk of developing type 2 diabetes.^{vi}
- More than 85 percent of people who have type 2 diabetes are overweight, and more than 50 percent are obese.^{vii}
- Almost 90 percent of people with type 2 diabetes are overweight.^{viii} In addition, in one large study of more than 27,000 people, those in the highest 10 percent of waist circumference were 20 times more likely to get type 2 diabetes than those in the lowest 10 percent of waist circumference.^{ix}
 - The rate of new cases of diagnosed diabetes rose by more than 90 percent among adults over the last 10 years, according to a study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).^x
- Risk factors for type 2 diabetes include: high blood pressure, abnormal cholesterol levels, physical inactivity, family history of diabetes, personal history of gestational diabetes and personal history of cardiovascular disease.^{xi}
 - African Americans, Hispanic Americans, American Indians, some Asian Americans, and Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders are at a particularly high risk for type 2 diabetes.^{xii}
- Prevalence rates for diabetes are similar to prevalence rates for obesity.
 - An estimated 23.6 million children and adults in the United States (7.8 percent of the population) have diabetes. Out of this group, 25 percent (5.7 million people) are unaware that they have the disease.^{xiii}

- Eight states are in the top 10 for both highest rates of diabetes and highest rates of obesity: Alabama, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee and West Virginia.^{xiv}
- If current prevalence trends for diabetes continue, an estimated 48.3 million people in the U.S. will have diabetes in 2050.^{xv}
- Diabetes is associated with serious health complications.
 - High blood glucose levels damage nerves and blood vessels, which may cause heart disease, stroke, blindness, kidney disease, nerve problems and amputations.^{xvi}
 - Overweight and obesity are associated with increased mortality from diabetes and kidney disease, resulting in over 60,000 excess deaths per year.^{xvii}
- The medical costs of diabetes in 2008 were \$116 billion. People with diagnosed diabetes have medical costs that are 2.3 times higher than those without the disease.^{xviii}
- Type 2 diabetes, in the past referred to as adult onset diabetes, is now being diagnosed among children and adolescents.^{xix}
 - Research shows even small amounts of weight loss in the range of five-10 percent can prevent or delay the development of type 2 diabetes among high-risk adults and lead to major improvements in key health areas.^{xx}
- Research has shown that losing weight can significantly reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes.^{xxi} Reducing fat and calorie intake and exercising regularly helps promote weight loss.
 - Lifestyle interventions are effective: Results from the Diabetes Prevention Program showed that participants who received intensive individual counseling and motivational support on diet, exercise and behavior modification reduced their risk of developing diabetes by 58 percent.^{xxii}
 - Research shows that modest weight loss (five -10 percent of body weight) can reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes among high risk adults.^{xxiii}
- Addressing a patient's obesity is an important part of treating diabetes, because losing excess weight can help control blood glucose levels. Treatment for diabetes includes a carefully managed diet, exercise program and behavior modification.^{xxiv}
 - Medication may also be necessary for controlling cholesterol and blood pressure.

About the STOP Obesity Alliance

The Strategies to Overcome and Prevent (STOP) Obesity Alliance is a collaboration of consumer, provider, government, labor, business, health insurers and quality-of-care organizations united to drive innovative and practical strategies that combat obesity. The STOP Obesity Alliance is directed by Research Professor Christine C. Ferguson, J.D., of The George Washington University's Department of Health Policy and former Health Commissioner for the State of Massachusetts. Richard H. Carmona, M.D., M.P.H., FACS, 17th U.S. Surgeon General (2002-2006) and President of the non-profit Canyon Ranch Institute, serves as Health and Wellness Chairperson of the Alliance. The Alliance Steering Committee is comprised of the following public and private sector organizations: American Diabetes Association, American Heart Association, America's Health Insurance Plans, American Medical Group Association, Canyon Ranch Institute, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's Division of

Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity (DNPAO), DMAA: The Care Continuum Alliance, National Business Group on Health, National Quality Forum, Partnership for Prevention, Reality Coalition, Service Employees International Union, The Obesity Society and Trust for America's Health. The Strategies to Overcome and Prevent (STOP) Obesity Alliance receives funding from founding sponsor, Sanofi U.S. For more information, visit www.stopobesityalliance.org.

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