

## **Why Does Weight Matter?**

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Overweight and obesity are the most common nutritional disorder in the United States, affecting a majority of the adults in the country. In order to determine overweight, medical providers use an indicator called body mass index, or BMI. BMI is determined by taking weight in kilograms (there are 2.2 kilograms per pound) and dividing it by height in meters squared (there are 39 inches per meter).

34% of adults are overweight (BMI 25-29.9), and 27% are obese (BMI greater than 30). The prevalence of obesity has increased by more than 75% since 1980.

### **Why should you care if you are medically overweight or obese?**

Obesity is associated with significant increases in both morbidity (having more diseases) and mortality (death). Many disorders occur with greater frequency in obese people. The most common are hypertension, type II diabetes mellitus, hyperlipidemia, coronary artery disease, osteoarthritis, psychosocial disability (like depression and low self esteem), cancers (colon, rectum and prostate in men; uterus, biliary tract, breast and ovary in women), thromboembolic disorders, and gallbladder stones. Surgical and obstetric risks are greater as well.

### **Why do some people become obese?**

Sedentary (non-active) lifestyle and chronic ingestion of excess calories (frequent eating of more calories than you burn in a day) play a principle cause in many cases. There is also strong evidence that genetic influences play a major role in 40-70% of obesity.

### **How can you lose weight?**

Most *successful* programs employ a multidisciplinary approach to weight loss. These programs include hypocaloric (low calorie) diets, behavior modifications to change eating habits, aerobic exercise and social support.

**Diet:** Many studies demonstrate that obese adults can lose about 0.5 kg (1.1 lb) per week by decreasing their daily intake to 500-1000 Kcal (calories) below the caloric intake required for maintenance of their current weight. This amount is dependent on your age, health status, height and weight, and should be determined with the help of a medical provider. An appropriate diet should consist of low fat, high complex-carbohydrate, high-fiber diet. Be particularly careful to limit consumption of foods - like fat, sucrose (sugar) and alcohol - that provide a large amount of calories without other nutrients. Increasing how frequently you eat is a good strategy, as long as you do not also increase the overall amount of calories you eat. People who eat breakfast have a lower risk of developing obesity than individuals who do not. Eating frequent small meals with relatively high carbohydrate and high fiber content can help you feel less hungry while decreasing fat intake from snack sources like chips and candy bars.

**Exercise:** Aerobic exercise is essential for successfully losing weight and maintaining weight loss. Exercise also decreases the risk of heart disease, diabetes, stroke, and osteoporosis, and decreases blood pressure and cholesterol. Even gentle aerobic exercise like an half-hour walk daily is beneficial.

**Social Support:** Social support is also essential for a successful weight loss program. Involvement of the whole family and peer group (friends, co-workers) is useful for reinforcing behavioral change and preventing social isolation. Close contact with and support from a counselor or therapist can also be very helpful.

**Pharmacologic approaches:** There are several medications approved by the FDA for weight loss. Some of these medications are over-the-counter. Generally, if medication is initiated,

weight loss will only occur in the first few weeks. It is best to consult a medical provider before taking any medication, including over-the-counter medication, for weight loss.

If you are concerned that you might be overweight or want to learn more about losing weight, providers at Iliuliuk Family and Health Services, Inc. can help you to develop a plan that will work best for you.