



# COLORADO ACADEMY OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS

2224 S. Fraser St., Unit 1, Aurora, CO 80014  
Phone: 303-696-6655 Toll-Free: 800-468-8615 Fax: 303-696-7224

## **Living Healthy: Obesity - A Growing Health Issue**

Today, more than 78 million adults and approximately 12.5 million children in the U.S. are obese. Colorado has long enjoyed the reputation of having a lean and active population. However, in 2010 that changed when 20 percent or more of the state's population was determined to be obese according to the Center for Disease Control. To combat this growing health issue, it is important to understand obesity and how to make changes that will lead to better health.

### **What is the medical definition of obesity?**

Obesity is defined as having a body mass index (BMI) greater than 29.9. A person's BMI number is calculated based on weight and height. Someone overweight falls within the range of 25 to 29.9 and people with a BMI of 30 or above are considered obese. [Click here to calculate Body Mass Index](#)

### **What health problems are linked to obesity?**

Obesity can lead to many other health problems including diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, joint problems, heart disease and stroke. By eating a healthy diet and engaging in regular physical activity, people can often avoid developing these medical problems. In some cases, changing lifestyle habits can actually make these health issues go away.

### **Is rapid weight loss the best solution?**

There are no magic solutions for weight loss. It took time to put on the pounds, and it will take time to take them off. In fact, quick solutions such as fad and crash 'diets' usually don't provide appropriate nutrition and usually don't change the lifestyle habits that led to obesity in the first place. They may even cause unexpected health problems.

### **What are factors that lead to obesity?**

Obesity is linked to many socioeconomic factors. Primarily it stems from taking in more calories than we burn. This may come in the form of eating too many prepackaged foods, fast food or from a lack of exercise. To combat obesity, it is important to try and make healthy food choices for every meal and to lead an active lifestyle.

### **Actions**

The best way to achieve a healthy weight is to take in fewer calories than the body burns. This doesn't mean giving up favorite foods, but following a healthy diet most of the time. A healthy diet can include foods like lean meats, poultry and fish, beans, eggs, nuts, fruits, vegetables, whole grains and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products.

Also, it's important to be active throughout the day. This can include simple things like a daily walk or taking the stairs instead of the elevator. Be aware of things that trigger eating.

### **Eating on the Go**

Fast food isn't the only option for people working long hours and having limited time. A little planning goes a long way.

- Keep the refrigerator and pantry stocked with "grab and go" snacks such as apples, berries, raw nuts, low-fat yogurt, cottage cheese and dried fruit.
- When dining out, watch portion size. Order a "lunch" portion or split the meal and eat half and take the other half home.
- If fast food is the only option look for the menu choices that include vegetables and lean meats.
- Maintaining a healthy weight has many long-term benefits. Parents also play a key role by modeling a healthy lifestyle. Promoting physical activity and providing healthy food choices will develop positive habits for your children that will last a lifetime.

Reviewed by: Lisa Rothgery, MD

This information is provided as a public service by the Colorado Academy of Family Physicians. For more information on staying healthy, food and nutrition, and exercise and fitness, visit the American Academy of Family Physicians' consumer website [www.familydoctor.org](http://www.familydoctor.org)