



Women's Health Research Institute
Putting Women First

May 2014

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Dear Friend,

This month, to celebrate National Women's Health Week (May 12-16), the Institute will be hosting its third annual expanded version of our monthly forum on May 15 which is open to clinicians, researchers and community women! This event features exhibits of services of interest to women, posters on the latest women's health research, and a lecture entitled, *Metabolically Healthy Obese: Reality or Fantasy?*. It is always a well-attended event so register early! Details can be found at the end of this newsletter.

In keeping with our event theme, this e-newsletter also explores the diagnosis and causes of obesity which has reached epidemic levels in our country. With summer finally in sight, this is a good time to reexamine your lifestyle habits and work on a plan for more exercise and healthier eating when the warm weather begins!

Sincerely,

The Institute Staff

Understanding Obesity

Obesity means having excessive body fat. According to a February, 2014 study

published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, more than one-third of adults and 17% of youth in the United States are obese. With numbers as high as these, it is time to truly start addressing the health, economic, and social issues that influence obesity. It is important to understand where you fall on the scale of healthy and unhealthy so that you may seek dietary and medical help accordingly.

Health is not about obtaining the lowest weight possible, it is about being the appropriate weight. The difference is that a 5'1 women can not, and should not, compare her weight with a women who is 5'8. Below you will learn how to properly determine your weight status.

Are You at a "Normal" Weight?

It is important to understand the differences between the levels of weight status. In the chart below you will see that there is a distinction between being "overweight" and "obese." Obese and overweight describe ranges of weight that are greater than what is considered healthy for a given height, while underweight describes a weight that is lower than what is considered healthy.

There are several ways you can tell if your body mass has changed. Perhaps your doctor has detected high blood pressure or high cholesterol that could be influenced by excessive weight or it could be that your clothes are beginning to fit tighter. The best way to assess your current weight and create a "normal" weight goal is by calculating your Body Mass Index (BMI.)

Body Mass Index (BMI) is a number calculated from a person's weight and height. BMI provides a reliable indicator of body fatness for most people and is used to screen for weight categories that may lead to health problems.

[CLICK HERE](#) for the Adult BMI Calculator

BMI	Weight Status
Below 18.5	Underweight
18.5 - 24.9	Normal
25.0 - 29.9	Overweight
30.0 and Above	Obese

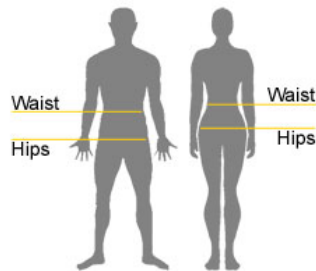
If your BMI falls outside of the "normal" or Healthy Weight range, you may want to talk to your doctor or health care provider about ways to achieve a healthier body weight.

There are other tools to assess your body weight such as measuring your waist circumference. Your waistline may be telling you that you have a higher risk of developing obesity-related conditions if you are:

- A man whose waist circumference is more than 40 inches
- A non-pregnant woman whose waist circumference is more than 35 inches

Excessive abdominal fat is serious because it places you at greater risk for developing obesity-related conditions, such as Type 2 Diabetes, high blood cholesterol, high triglycerides, high blood pressure, and coronary artery disease.

How to Measure Your Waist



To measure your waist size (circumference), place a tape measure around your bare abdomen just above your hip bone. Be sure that the tape is snug, but does not compress your skin, and is parallel to the floor. Relax, exhale, and measure your waist.

Children and Teens

The BMI is also used as a screening tool to identify possible weight problems for children. CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommend the use of BMI to screen for overweight and obesity in children beginning at 2 years old since obese children are more likely to become obese adults.

[CLICK HERE](#) for the Child and Teen BMI Calculator

Weight Status Category Percentile Range

Underweight	Less than the 5th percentile
Healthy weight	5th percentile to less than the 85th percentile
Overweight	85th to less than the 95th percentile
Obese	Equal to or greater than the 95th percentile

However, the calculations and percentiles for children are accumulated differently. For children and teens, the BMI number is plotted on the CDC BMI-for-age growth charts (for either girls or boys). Percentiles are the most commonly used indicator to assess the size and growth patterns of individual children in the United States. The percentile indicates the relative position of the child's BMI number among children of the same sex and age. The growth charts show the weight status categories used with children and teens (underweight, healthy weight, overweight, and obese). To learn more about child and teen BMI calculations, **[click here](#)**

What Causes Overweight and Obesity?

Genetics



Science shows that genetics plays a role in obesity. Genes can directly cause obesity in disorders such as Bardet-Biedl syndrome and Prader-Willi syndrome. However genes do not always predict future health. Genes and behavior may both be needed for a person to be overweight. In some cases multiple genes may increase one's susceptibility for obesity and require outside factors; such as abundant food supply or little physical activity.

Environment



People may make decisions based on their environment or community. For example, a person may choose not to walk to the store or to work because of a lack of sidewalks. Community, home, child care, school, health care, and workplace settings can all influence people's health decisions. Therefore, it is important to create environments in these locations that make it easier to engage in physical activity and eat a healthy diet.

Other Factors

Some illnesses may lead to obesity or weight gain. These may include Cushing's disease, and polycystic ovary syndrome. Drugs such as steroids and some antidepressants may also cause weight gain.

Possible Causes for the Rise of Childhood Obesity

Increased use of childcare



More than 12 million children regularly spend time in child care arrangements outside the home. However, not all states use licensing regulations to ensure that child care facilities encourage more healthful eating and physical activity.

Lack of daily, quality physical activity in all schools

Most adolescents fall short of the recommendation of at least 60 minutes of aerobic physical activity each day, as only 18% of students in grades 9-12 met this recommendation in 2007. Daily, quality physical education in school can help students meet the guidelines. However, in 2009 only 33% attended daily physical education classes.

Limited access to healthy affordable foods



Some people have less access to stores and supermarkets that sell healthy, affordable food such as fruits and vegetables, especially in rural, minority, and lower-income neighborhoods. Supermarket access is associated with a reduced risk for obesity. Choosing healthy foods is difficult for parents who live in areas with an overabundance of food retailers that tend to sell less healthy food, such as convenience stores and fast food restaurants.



Consequences of Overweight and Obesity

Health Consequences

Research has shown that as weight increases to reach the levels referred to as "overweight" and "obesity," the risks for the following conditions also increase:

- Coronary heart disease
- Type 2 diabetes
- Cancers (endometrial, breast, and colon)
- Hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Dyslipidemia (for example, high total cholesterol or high levels of triglycerides)
- Stroke
- Liver and Gallbladder disease
- Sleep apnea and respiratory problems
- Osteoarthritis (a degeneration of cartilage and its underlying bone within a joint)
- Gynecological problems (abnormal menses, infertility)

Economic Consequences

Overweight and obesity and their associated health problems have a significant economic impact on the U.S. health care system. Medical costs associated with overweight and obesity may involve direct and indirect costs. Direct medical costs may include preventive, diagnostic, and treatment services related to obesity. Indirect costs relate to morbidity and mortality costs.

Sex and Gender Differences of Obesity

Obesity is different for men and women, however its prevalence is almost equal. In the US, 35.5% of men and 35.8% of women are considered obese. Although the percentages are similar, studies show that the distribution of fat in our bodies are what make the difference regarding health risks. Men are more likely to carry

excess fat around their abdomen, which is riskier than carrying weight around the hips and thighs as many women do. Therefore, for men, more fat is found deeper down in the abdomen and surrounds the internal organs (visceral fat) which substantially increases the risk of heart disease, metabolic syndrome and diabetes.

Although women do not obtain as much visceral fat as men, obese women and any adult or child are still prone to many more health issues than those at a "normal" weight. The tools such as the BMI calculator will help in determining your weight status, but it is always advised to consult with your doctor to confirm and create a health plan. The good news is, in the case of obesity, any little bit of weight lost will decrease your health risks and result in major health benefits!

Sources:

NIH, NHLBI Obesity Education Initiative. Clinical Guidelines on the Identification, Evaluation, and Treatment of Overweight and Obesity in Adults.

Barlow SE and the Expert Committee. Expert committee recommendations regarding the prevention, assessment, and treatment of child and adolescent overweight and obesity: summary report. Pediatrics 2007;120 Supplement December 2007:S164-S192.

[Center for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)

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INSTITUTE HAPPENINGS

WHRI Will Host Annual 'Celebrating Women's Health' Forum on May 15, 2014

Join us during National Women's Health Week for our extended forum featuring women's health exhibitors, women's health research posters, and Dr. Mercedes Carnethon's keynote presentation entitled "Metabolically Healthy Obese: Reality or Fantasy?" This event will run from 11:00am-1:30pm on Thursday, May 15, 2014 in Prentice Women's Hospital (250 E. Superior Street), 3rd Floor Conference Room, L South.

If you are a non-profit or for-profit exhibitor who would like a women's health informational table on display, please fill out our [Information Table Application](#) by May 3, 2014.

If you are a researcher who would like to display a poster on a topic important to women's health, please fill out our [Abstract Submission Application](#) by May 3, 2014.

If you would like to attend our Celebrating Women's Health Forum, please [register today](#) to reserve your seat and lunch!

* The lecture will be at noon so come before or after to visit the exhibits

The Women's Health Research Institute's high school summer program

Student applications still begin accepted!!!

The [Women's Health Science Program](#) (WHSP) is an accomplished citywide high school STEM education program. The Summer 2014 WHSP academy will be held June 23-27 from 8:00am-4:00pm. Applicants must be available for the full week of WHSP in order to apply. The application deadline for 2014 is Monday, May 12, 2014. Additionally, there will be an orientation on Friday, June 20th. For further information and to apply, please click on the student link below.

[Student Application](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

[The Next 50 Years: Creating a Campus Climate of Equity & Respect, A Workshop with Equity Consultant Gary Howard, MED May 7, 2014](#)

[National Women's Health Week Research Forum featuring Dr. Mercedes Carnethon presenting "Metabolically Healthy Obese: Reality or Fantasy?" May 15, 2014](#)

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