



Weighty Matters

Carrying around pounds of excess body fat is a heavy burden on many levels. Being obese increases the risk for all leading causes of death (including diabetes, heart attack, stroke and cancer) as well as other chronic health conditions and poor mental health.

Obesity is epidemic in the U.S. Primary causes are eating too much and moving too little. Our jobs are primarily sedentary, everyday conveniences allow us to walk less, and we prefer our leisure on the couch. Adding to the equation, we often fill up on easily available cheap fast food and snacks.

If you're struggling with a serious weight problem, you're not alone – more than a third of U.S. adults are obese. Keep in mind, losing as little as 5% to 10% of your body weight offers significant health improvement, even if you never achieve your ideal weight.

First step: Review your health habits and history with your health care provider to learn which behaviors, related illnesses or physical or psychological factors are causing weight gain or making weight loss difficult.

Second step: Walk it off.

Burning a hundred or so calories per mile might not seem like much, but it can inspire better weight control and confidence that you can feel well again. Try to fit in a walk every day.



Hypertension:

High Risk for Type 2 Diabetes

High blood pressure (hypertension) is a major risk factor for developing type 2 diabetes. Once you're diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, controlling both your blood sugar and blood pressure (BP) levels is essential to avoiding serious health complications. *Continued on back.* >>



February is American Heart Month.

QuikRisk™ Assessment: What Do You Do for Your Heart?

One hundred years ago, heart disease was much less common and most physicians never treated it because people died from other causes and didn't live as long as we do now. Today, however, it's our No. 1 health enemy.

Check the habits you practice for heart protection:

- I keep my **waist circumference** below 35 inches (for women) or below 40 inches (for men).
- I don't **smoke** or I'm trying to quit smoking.
- I get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity **exercise** a week.
- I eat at least 2 cups of **fruit** and 2½ cups of **vegetables** daily and restrict **sugar** as well as saturated and **trans fats**.
- I restrict **alcohol** to 1 drink a day (for women) or 2 drinks a day (for men).
- I get routine checks of my **vital signs** (blood pressure, cholesterol, triglycerides and blood sugar) as my provider advises.

Scoring:

If you answered **yes** to at least 4 statements, well done. If you mostly answered **no**, you've got changes to make.

Best prescription:

Replace the negative lifestyle factors that put your heart at risk with the heart-protective habits listed above.



Your Health: Excess Body Fat

How much should you weigh for good health?

Body weight actually matters less than body fat for health protection. In particular, excessive abdominal fat may increase your risk for type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and coronary artery disease.



We have 2 standards for measuring excess body fat in relation to health.

1. Body Mass Index (BMI) – Your health care provider typically will check your weight and height at each office visit to identify BMI. Weight that is higher than what is considered healthy for a given height is considered overweight or obese.

BMI is only an estimated calculation of total body fat without regard for the individual's muscle weight or the location of fat. For example, abdominal fat is considered more harmful than fat in the hips and thighs.

2. Waist circumference – This measure provides an independent prediction of risk over and above that of BMI. Your waistline may say your health is at risk if you are:

A man with a waist wider than 40 inches.

A woman (non-pregnant) with a waist wider than 35 inches.

Measure your waist carefully: Place a tape measure around your middle, just above your hipbones. Keep the tape evenly horizontal all the way around, without compressing the skin.

Your BMI reflects total body fatness, while waist measure is the best estimate of visceral fat and risk for obesity-related diseases. To fully evaluate your individual health status and risks, your provider will want to perform necessary health assessments.

Hypertension:

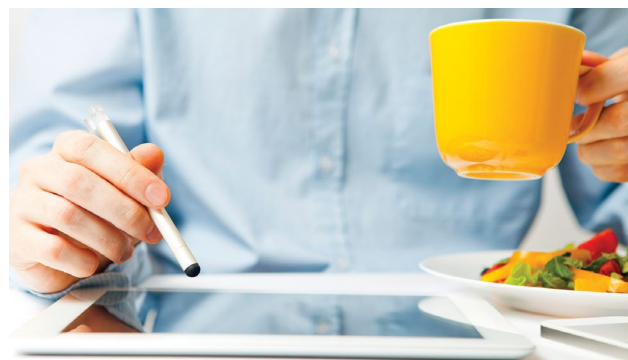
High Risk for Type 2 Diabetes

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With high BP, your blood is pumping through your heart and blood vessels with elevated force. Over time, hypertension weakens your heart muscle, leaving it vulnerable to serious problems. The recommended BP level for people with type 2 is under 130/80.

The combination of hypertension and type 2 is especially damaging and can significantly raise the risk of having a heart attack or stroke. Hypertension can accelerate the progression of diabetes; even a mild rise in BP can quickly worsen kidney disease, a common risk with diabetes.

To keep your blood pressure healthy: Lose excess weight, get regular exercise and stop using tobacco and alcohol – all things that can also help prevent or treat type 2 diabetes. If you already have both conditions, you may need more than 1 medication to improve your numbers – discuss all options with your health care provider.



Food Fads: *Behind the Headlines*

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

Before you go gluten free or start a juice cleanse, do your homework. Here's some information that will help you make educated decisions about your diet.

>> Is coconut oil the best fat?

Coconut oil has been touted for everything from fat loss and improving cholesterol to boosting brain function.



Early research appears promising but much of the buzz about coconut is marketing hype for products containing it; look for credible data. Olive oil remains the best-researched fat for heart and brain health. Whichever oil you choose, practice moderation. Aim for no more than 2 to 3 tablespoons per day.

>> Should I try a gluten-free diet?

Gluten is a protein found in wheat, rye, barley and foods containing these grains. For the 1% of the population with celiac disease and the 5% with gluten intolerance, restricting gluten is the key treatment for their condition. But for the rest of us, there's no scientific reason to avoid gluten. If you suspect that you have celiac disease or gluten intolerance, get properly tested. Don't self-diagnose these conditions or prescribe your own diet. Check with your health care provider or dietitian first.

>> Do I need to detox?

Detoxifying with juice fasts, detox teas and cayenne-lemon cleanses is unnecessary. The human body is equipped with a natural detoxification system to rid the body of waste – it's our kidneys, liver, intestines and skin. We cleanse and detox every time we sweat, urinate or defecate. No fancy juice concoctions are required.

Best advice: When researching health topics use reliable sources, including those with **.gov** in their URL (e.g., CDC, National Institutes of Health, Healthfinder.gov and National Library of Medicine).

"To reach a great height, a person needs to have great depth." – Anonymous



Smart Moves toolkit is at www.personalbest.com/extras/17V2tools.

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