

Obesity is an epidemic that is the greatest threat to public health today. It kills more Americans today than AIDS, all cancers and accidents combined.

Determining whether an individual is obese or overweight can be identified by measuring one's BMI. This is a simple calculation of the total body fat and your doctor can determine this in the office using the ratio of weight to height. A normal value is between 18.5 and 24.5. A BMI of 25- 29.9 is classified as being overweight and that over 30 is considered obese with gradations of mild, moderate and obese.

Obesity is an important predictor of risk for diseases such as diabetes, Hypertension, coronary artery disease, arthritis , reflux esophagitis, gall bladder disease, sleep disorders and even certain cancers and death.

Psychosocial complications of obesity are as significant as physical health. It has been associated with lower morale and self esteem that in return interfere with the ability to take good care of one's health.

There may be other medical causes of obesity that your doctor could help identify based on physical exam and additional blood tests. Genetics can play a small role in certain patients however that is an exception rather than the rule. Societal pressures expose individuals to high calorie convenience foods. Technological advances that promote sedentary lifestyles are common causes of involuntary obesity.

Diet , physical exercise , medications and surgery are the various approaches in dealing with obesity and intended weight loss. The crux of the matter is that for weight loss to occur energy expenditure should be greater than energy intake. Rapid weight loss should be avoided aiming for a gradual loss of 1lb per week. One should consult a physician before starting any exercise program as heart disease may be prevalent. Involvement of a dietitian improves the likelihood of weight reduction .

Medications are sometimes used in addition to the above interventions especially with patients whose BMI is greater than 30 or if they have other medical conditions like diabetes or arthritis that are exacerbated by concomitant obesity. Surgery known as a bariatric procedure is reserved for those who are unable to lose weight with conventional therapy and whose BMI is greater than 35 with obesity related disease.

Maintenance of ideal body weight is difficult as multiple mechanisms exist to restore the body to the original body weight. A low fat diet and physical activity of moderate intensity for example brisk walking 80min a day or jogging 35minutes a day expending 2500Cal is protective against weight gain.