

Obesity Statistics



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KEYWORDS

- Obesity • Obesity epidemic • Epidemiology of obesity • Obesity in adults
- Obesity in children and adolescent

KEY POINTS

- Obesity is a chronic disease that is associated with increased morbidity and mortality, including cancer, cardiovascular disease, disability, diabetes mellitus, hypertension, osteoarthritis, and stroke.
- Obesity occurs because of an energy imbalance between caloric intake and expenditure. The resulting energy excess and associated weight gain are caused by a complex interaction between genetics, environment, economics, and individual behaviors.
- Worldwide, more than 2.1 billion people are overweight or obese. In the United States nearly 35% of adults are classified as obese and one-third of children and adolescents are obese or overweight.
- Overweight and obesity are the fifth leading cause of death in the world, accounting for nearly 3.4 million deaths annually.
- Obesity-related health care costs are difficult to ascertain precisely and vary between countries. In the United States, obesity-related costs of several hundred billion dollars have been reported.

INTRODUCTION

Obesity is a complex, multifactorial disease that is strongly associated with multiple comorbidities.^{1–6} These comorbidities include certain types of cancer, cardiovascular disease, disability, diabetes mellitus, gallbladder disease, hypertension, osteoarthritis, sleep apnea, and stroke.¹ Obesity is associated with a high rate of cardiovascular and all-cause mortality.⁷ Obesity has been described as a worldwide pandemic.⁴ Globally, the prevalence of overweight and obesity increased by 28% in adults and 47% in children between 1980 and 2013.⁴ Current estimates suggest that there are nearly 2.1 billion people in the world who are either overweight or obese.⁴ In the United

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States, data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys (NHANES) collected between 2011 and 2012 suggest that 35% of adults are obese.⁸ Likewise, nearly 17% of American children and adolescents are obese and nearly one-third are either obese or overweight.⁸ Obesity is the fifth leading cause of death, estimated to be associated with 3.4 million deaths in 2010.⁴ Current trends in obesity seem stable in most developed countries, with the notable exception that the number of individuals classified as morbidly obese continues to increase.⁴ The prevalence of obesity in developing countries is increasing toward levels currently seen in the United States.⁴ Expenditures of \$190 billion per year are associated with the treatment of obesity and obesity-related complications,⁹ which represents approximately 21% of total United States health care expenditures.⁹ Compared with normal-weight people, obese individuals are responsible for 46% higher inpatient costs, 27% more outpatient visits, and 80% higher spending on prescription medications.¹⁰ Obesity results from an energy imbalance between caloric intake and caloric expenditure. Multiple factors, including genetics, socioeconomic status, environment, and individual decisions, all play a significant role in the pathogenesis of obesity. This article reviews the epidemiology of obesity with an emphasis on disease description, risk factors, prevalence and incidence, and mortalities.

DISEASE DESCRIPTION

To understand obesity, a description of body weight classification for both adults and children is necessary. Body mass index (BMI) is the most widely used standard for classifying somatotype. BMI is obtained by dividing weight in kilograms by height in meters squared. BMI classifications for white, Hispanic, and African American adults have been endorsed by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, the World Health Organization (WHO), the American Heart Association, American College of Cardiology, and The Obesity Society^{2,11,12} (**Table 1**).

- Normal weight: BMI greater than 18 to 24.9 kg/m²
- Overweight: BMI greater than 25 to 29.9 kg/m²
- Obesity: BMI greater than 30 kg/m²
- Obesity class I: BMI of 30 to 34.9 kg/m²
- Obesity class II: BMI of 35 to 39.9 kg/m²
- Obesity class III (severe obesity): BMI greater than 40 kg/m² (or >35 kg/m² in the presence of comorbidities)

This traditional BMI classification underestimates risk in Asian and South Asian people. A separate guideline for this population classifies overweight as a BMI between 23 and 24.9 kg/m² and obesity as a BMI of greater than 25 kg/m².¹³

Body weight classifications also differ significantly between adults and children because of variations in growth and resultant body surface area. There are also significant differences between boys and girls. The WHO Child Growth Standards are used internationally for children from birth to 5 years old.¹ Updated classifications for children from the age of 5 years old to 19 years old were published in 2007.¹ In the United States, data from the National Center for Health Care Statistics and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are used to determine age-appropriate weight for children between 2 and 19 years of age (see **Table 1**):

- Normal weight: BMI between the 5th and 85th percentiles for age and sex
- Overweight: BMI between the 85th and 95th percentiles for age and sex
- Obese: BMI greater than 95th percentile for age and sex

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