

# A weight loss journey

## Everything starts with one step

The words “lifestyle change” can be intimidating. But change can begin with one simple step. Many factors, like family genetics and emotional issues, play a part in becoming overweight. That’s why about a third of adults in America are obese.<sup>1</sup> That means they weigh more than in the healthy range for their bodies.

### Why this matters

If you’re obese, your body mass index (BMI) is 30 or higher and you may still feel healthy. But carrying extra pounds is linked to health conditions like heart disease, diabetes, cancer, stroke and osteoarthritis.<sup>1</sup>

Usually, eating more calories than your body needs causes weight gain. But your genetics also play a part. Yes, even some people who eat well and exercise can become obese.<sup>2</sup> Another important factor is gender. Men tend to have more muscle than women, and because muscle burns more calories even at rest than other types of tissue, men are less likely to gain weight. On the other hand, women tend to retain four to six extra pounds after each pregnancy.

As you age, your metabolism slows down and you lose muscle mass, which can lead to weight gain.<sup>2</sup> Even habits picked up from the people around you and our emotions can contribute to obesity. Many people overeat when bored or depressed.<sup>2</sup>

### How obesity can hurt your long-term health

These issues could result from obesity:<sup>1-3</sup>

- Type 2 diabetes
- Cardiovascular disease

- Stroke
- Hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Congestive heart failure
- Cancer of the kidney, endometrium, breast, colon and rectum, esophagus, prostate and gall bladder
- Sleep apnea and respiratory problems
- Stress urinary incontinence (losing urine without control)
- Dyslipidemia (high total cholesterol or high levels of triglycerides)
- Liver and gallbladder disease
- Osteoarthritis (a condition that causes the cartilage at the end of your bones to wear down)
- Emotional issues such as anxiety, depression and low self-esteem

### Know your numbers

Knowing your BMI can help you set weight loss goals. Use the following formula to find out your BMI:  $[\text{weight}/(\text{height}^2)] \times 703$ . Divide your weight in pounds by your height in inches squared, and multiply by 703.

**For example:** weight = 150 lbs., height = 5’5” (65”)

**Calculation:**  $[150 \div (65)^2] \times 703 = \text{BMI of } 24.96$

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: *About BMI for Adults* (September 2011) [cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/adult\\_BMI/about\\_adult\\_BMI.htm](http://cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/adult_BMI/about_adult_BMI.htm).

## Overweight or obese

There's a difference between being slightly overweight and being obese. According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), your doctor can measure your BMI, waist circumference and consider other risk factors like your activity level or other conditions to let you know where you stand.

## Shed old habits one step at a time

Setting small goals can keep you excited about making a big lifestyle change and losing weight. Doctors recommend a goal of losing 10% of your total body weight if you are obese. But even smaller amounts of weight loss are a victory:<sup>4</sup>

- Losing two pounds drops low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol levels by 1%.
- Losing 10 to 15 pounds can slow the development and halt the symptoms of knee osteoarthritis.
- Losing 5% to 10% of your body weight can raise high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol levels.
- Losing 5% to 15% of your body weight can lower your chances of developing heart disease or having a stroke.

## How to start?

When you're ready to begin your journey, there are several programs and discounts to support you through **SpecialOffers** at [anthem.com/ca](http://anthem.com/ca). You could join a program like Jenny Craig®, Weight Watchers® or the SelfHelpWorks. You can also get discounts on fitness club memberships and health and wellness products through ChooseHealthy™ or GlobalFit™.

## Check with your doctor

Talk to your doctor before you start a new weight loss and exercise program.

Here are some great tips from the NHLBI's "Guide to Behavior Change":

- **Set SAFE goals.** Specific, Attainable, Forgiving, Effective. Exercising 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week is a SAFE goal. The more realistic your goal is, the more likely you are to continue to succeed.
- **Monitor yourself.** Choose some aspect of your health program to track, whether it's your weight, calorie intake or exercise. Seeing your progress – exercising longer, eating fewer calories, dropping a couple pounds – can be very encouraging.
- **Be aware of your cues and triggers.** Pay attention to what makes you overeat or crave unhealthy foods, and make a plan for handling those situations. Also, eat slower. It takes 15 minutes for your brain to get the message that you are full.

## You've got support

Feeling supported when you begin to lose weight can make the process easier. Join online support groups on [obesitydiscussion.com](http://obesitydiscussion.com). Or, go to the NHLBI's website, [nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity](http://nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity), to access a BMI calculator, a menu planner, recipes, tip sheets and information about choosing the best weight loss program for you.

Remember, take weight loss one step at a time and make this journey an adventure.

Visit [anthem.com/ca](http://anthem.com/ca) for more ways to get healthy and stay healthy.

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: *Obesity* (accessed June 2014): [cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/obesity](http://cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/obesity)  
2. eMedicineHealth website: *Obesity* (accessed June 2014): [emedicinehealth.com](http://emedicinehealth.com)  
3. ObesityinAmerica website: *Understanding Obesity* (accessed June 2014): [obesityinamerica.org](http://obesityinamerica.org)  
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: *Overweight and Obesity* (accessed June 2014): [cdc.gov/obesity/index.html](http://cdc.gov/obesity/index.html)  
5. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute website: *Assessing Your Weight and Health Risk* (accessed June 2014): [nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/lose\\_wt/risk.htm](http://nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/lose_wt/risk.htm)  
6. MedicineNet.com website: *10 Ways to Help a Loved One Lose Weight* (accessed June 2014): [medicinenet.com](http://medicinenet.com)  
7. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute website: *Guide to Behavior Change* (accessed June 2014): [nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/lose\\_wt/behavior.htm](http://nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/lose_wt/behavior.htm)



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