

# Overweight and Obesity Statistics

U.S. Department of Health  
and Human Services



WIN *Weight-control Information Network*

## About Overweight and Obesity

This fact sheet describes the prevalence of overweight and obesity in the United States.

- **Overweight** refers to an excess amount of body weight that may come from muscles, bone, fat, and water.<sup>1</sup>
- **Obesity** refers to an excess amount of body fat.<sup>1</sup>

## Using Body Mass Index (BMI) to Estimate Overweight and Obesity

The BMI is the tool most commonly used to estimate overweight and obesity in children and adults.

**For adults**, overweight and obesity ranges are measured by using weight and height to compute the person's BMI. The BMI is used because, for most people, it correlates with the amount of fat in their bodies.

**Children** grow at different rates at different times, so it is not always easy to tell if a child is overweight. BMI charts for children compare their height and weight to other children of their same sex and age.

The tables to the right outline BMI scores and weight categories for adults and children. Online tools for gauging the BMIs of children and adults are listed in the Resources section of this fact sheet.

## Causes of Overweight and Obesity

Overweight and obesity result from an energy imbalance. The body needs a certain amount of energy (calories) from food to keep up basic life functions. Body weight tends to remain the same when the number of calories eaten equals the number of calories the body uses or "burns." Over time, when people eat and drink more calories than they burn, the energy balance tips toward weight gain, overweight, and obesity.

### Fast Facts

Data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 2009-2010<sup>2,3</sup>

- More than 2 in 3 adults are considered to be overweight or obese.
- More than 1 in 3 adults are considered to be obese.
- More than 1 in 20 adults are considered to have extreme obesity.
- About one-third of children and adolescents ages 6 to 19 are considered to be overweight or obese.
- More than 1 in 6 children and adolescents ages 6 to 19 are considered to be obese.

### BMI of Adults Age 20 and Older

BMI	Classification
18.5 to 24.9	Normal weight
25 to 29.9	Overweight
30 +	Obesity
40 +	Extreme obesity

### BMI of Children and Adolescents Ages 2-19

BMI	Classification
At or above the 85th percentile	Overweight or obese
At or above the 95th percentile	Obese

## Health Risks of Overweight and Obesity

- type 2 diabetes
- heart disease
- high blood pressure
- nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (excess fat and inflammation in the liver of people who drink little or no alcohol)
- osteoarthritis (a health problem causing pain, swelling, and stiffness in one or more joints)
- some types of cancer: breast, colon, endometrial (related to the uterine lining), and kidney
- stroke

Children need to balance their energy, too, but they are also growing and that should be considered as well. Energy balance in children happens when the amount of energy taken in from food or drink and the energy being used by the body support natural growth without promoting excess weight gain.

Many factors can lead to energy imbalance and weight gain. They include genes, eating habits, how and where people live, attitudes and emotions, life habits, and income.<sup>1</sup>

## Treatment of Overweight and Obesity

Overweight and obesity are risk factors for type 2 diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, and other health problems (see box).

There is no single cause of all overweight and obesity. There is no single approach that can help prevent or treat overweight and obesity. Treatment may include a mix of behavioral treatment, diet, exercise, and sometimes weight-loss drugs. In some cases of extreme obesity, weight-loss surgery may be an option.<sup>1</sup>

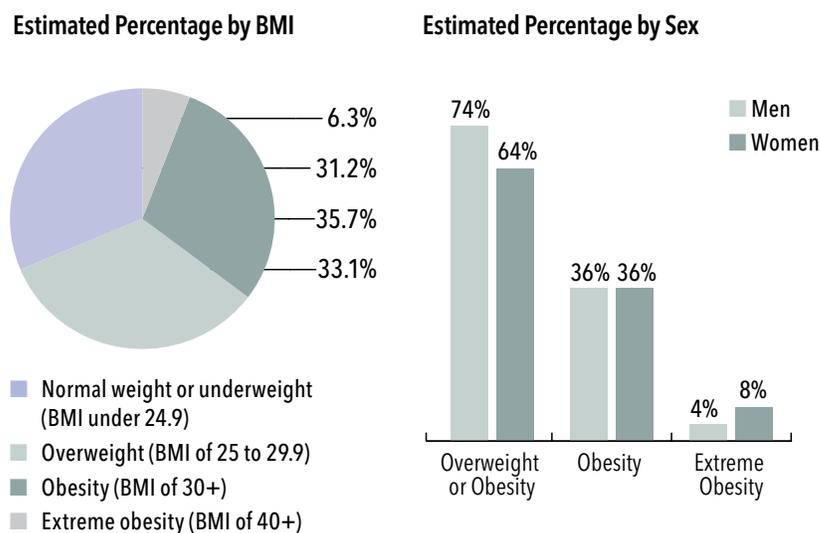
# Prevalence of Overweight and Obesity

The data presented in this fact sheet are from two surveys conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES)<sup>2,3</sup> and the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS).<sup>4</sup> For more information on these surveys, see the Resources section.

## Adults Age 20 and Older<sup>2</sup>

- More than two-thirds (68.8 percent) of adults are considered to be overweight or obese.
- More than one-third (35.7 percent) of adults are considered to be obese.
- More than 1 in 20 (6.3 percent) have extreme obesity.
- Almost 3 in 4 men (74 percent) are considered to be overweight or obese.
- The prevalence of obesity is similar for both men and women (about 36 percent).
- About 8 percent of women are considered to have extreme obesity.

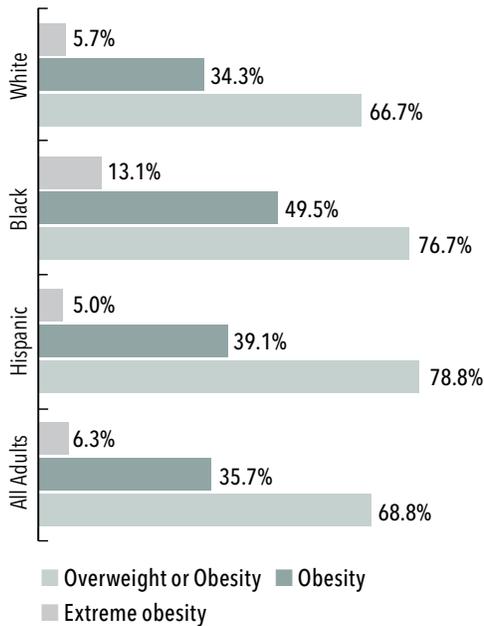
## Overweight and Obesity among Adults Age 20 and Older, United States, 2009-2010



Source: NHANES, 2009-2010

## Overweight and Obesity among Adults Age 20 and Older, United States, 2009–2010

### Estimated Percentage by Race/Ethnicity\*



Source: NHANES, 2009–2010

## Different Racial and Ethnic Groups—Adults\*

Among Hispanic, black, and white adults age 20 and older<sup>2</sup>:

- Overweight and obesity affect more than 3 in 4 Hispanics (78.8 percent) and blacks (76.7 percent).
- About 2 in 3 whites (66.7 percent) are considered to be overweight or obese.
- About half of blacks (49.5 percent), and more than 1 in 3 Hispanics (39.1 percent) and whites (34.3 percent) are considered to be obese.
- Extreme obesity affects more than 1 in 10 blacks (13.1 percent), and about 1 in 20 whites (5.7 percent) and Hispanics (5 percent).

Rates of obesity among Asian Americans are much lower than among other racial and ethnic groups. The following are general prevalence estimates from the 2010 NHIS for adults age 18 and older in these groups who reported being of one race.<sup>4</sup>

- Asian Americans: 11.6 percent
- American Indians and Alaska Natives: 39.9 percent
- Native Hawaiians or Other Pacific Islanders: 43.5 percent<sup>†</sup>

<sup>†</sup> This estimate is based on a small number of respondents (n = 284) in the category of Native Hawaiians or Other Pacific Islanders; relative standard error is greater than 30 percent and less than or equal to 50 percent.

## Children and Adolescents<sup>3</sup>

Young children ages 2 to 5 have a lower prevalence of overweight and obesity than older youth.

Among young people ages 2 to 19:

- About 31.8 percent are considered to be either overweight or obese, and 16.9 percent are considered to be obese.
- About 1 in 3 boys (33 percent) are considered to be overweight or obese, compared with 30.4 percent of girls.
- About 18.6 percent of boys and 15 percent of girls are considered to be obese.

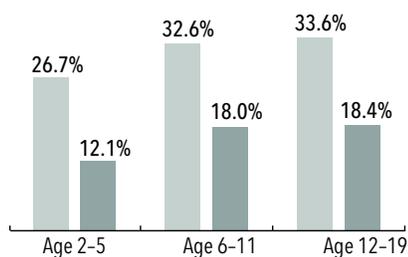
Among children and adolescents ages 6 to 19:

- Almost 1 in 3 (33.2 percent) are considered to be overweight or obese, and 18.2 percent are considered to be obese.
- More than 2 in 5 black and Hispanic youth (more than 41 percent) are considered to be overweight or obese.\*
- About 25.7 percent of black, 22.9 percent of Hispanic, and 15.2 percent of white youth are considered to be obese.\*

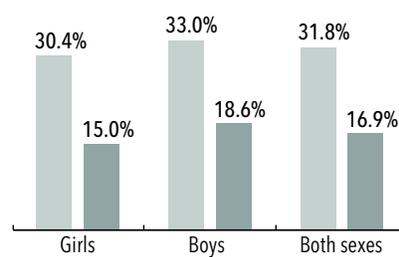
### Estimated Percentage of Youth with Overweight or Obesity, United States, 2009–2010

Overweight or Obesity Obesity

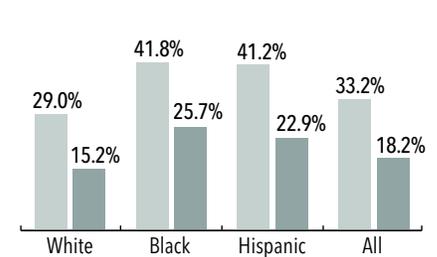
#### Percentage by Age Group, Ages 2–19



#### Percentage by Sex, Ages 2–19



#### Percentage by Race/Ethnicity, Ages 6–19\*

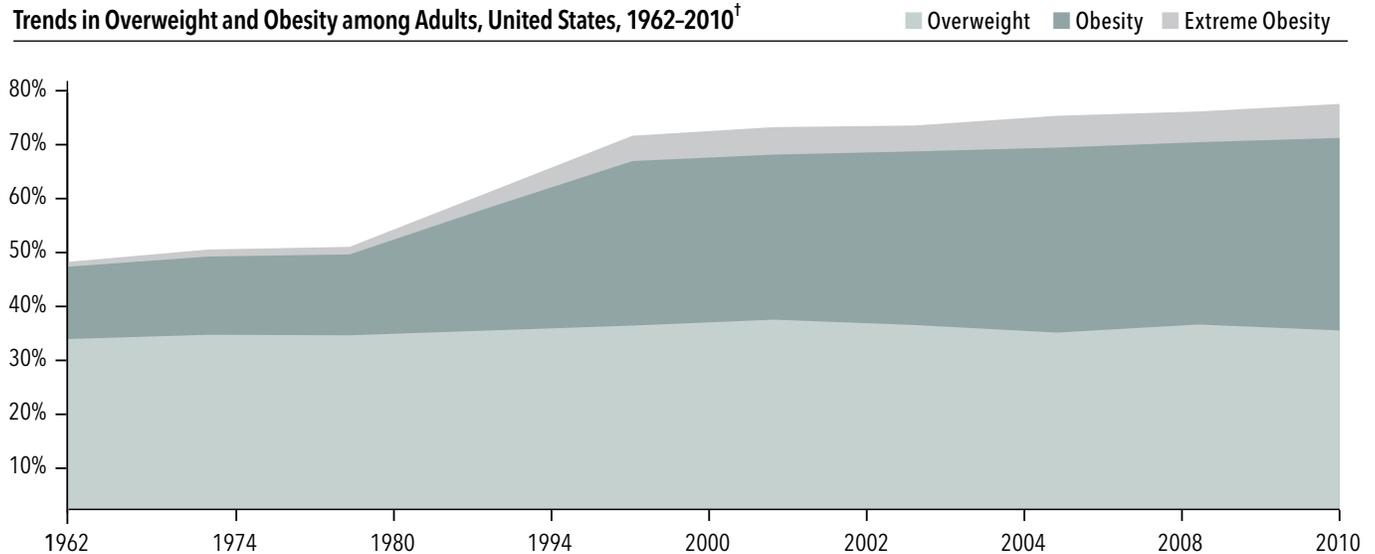


Source: NHANES, 2009–2010

## Changes over Time\*

- Since the early 1960s, the prevalence of obesity among adults more than doubled, increasing from 13.4 to 35.7 percent in U.S. adults age 20 and older.<sup>2,5</sup>
- Obesity prevalence remained mostly stable from 1999 to 2010, but has increased slightly, yet in a statistically significant way, among men overall, as well as among black women and Mexican American women.<sup>2</sup>
- Among children and adolescents, the prevalence of obesity also increased in the 1980s and 1990s but is now mostly stable at about 17 percent.<sup>3</sup>

### Trends in Overweight and Obesity among Adults, United States, 1962–2010<sup>†</sup>



Source: Ogden & Carroll, 2010; Flegal et al., 2012

<sup>†</sup>Data for 1960–1980 are for adults ages 20 to 74; data for 1988–2010 are for adults age 20 and older.

## Physical Activity Statistics

### Research Findings

- Research suggests that staying active may lower a person's chance of getting heart disease, stroke, some cancers, type 2 diabetes, and other conditions.
- Researchers believe that some physical activity is better than none. Extra health benefits can be gained by increasing how often and intensely one exercises and how long each session lasts.

### Adults

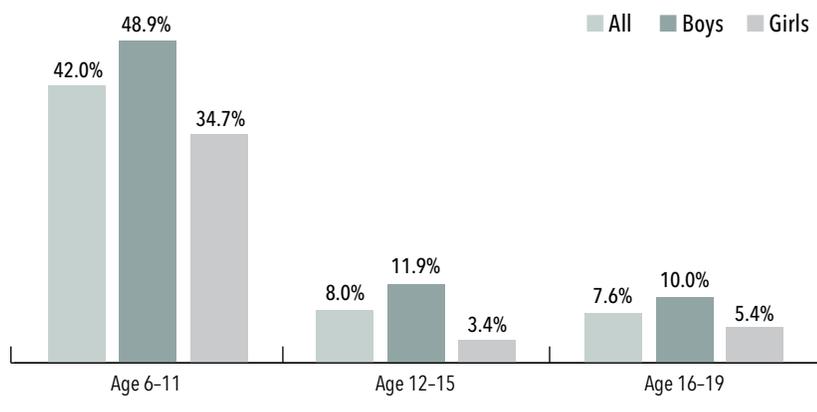
Government guidelines recommend that healthy adults take part in aerobic activity of moderate intensity for at least 150 minutes a week or vigorous intensity for 75 minutes a week.<sup>6</sup> Aerobic activity uses large muscles such as the legs and back and makes the heart beat faster. In addition, the guidelines recommend that people do activities that strengthen muscles (such as weight training or push-ups) at least twice a week.

Some studies measure physical activity by people's self-report of what they do. Other studies use a tool that records movement as it occurs. Researchers consider the studies using tools to be more accurate. A study conducted in 2003–2004 that used this type of tool to measure physical activity found that only about 3 to 5 percent of adults meet these recommendations.<sup>7</sup>

## Children and Adolescents

The physical activity guidelines also recommend that children and youth get at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily.

### Children and Adolescents Ages 6–19 Getting at Least 60 Minutes per Day of Physical Activity, United States, 2003–2004



Source: Troiano et al., 2008

## Research Findings

Findings from a study<sup>7</sup> conducted in 2003–2004 that measured physical activity using a tool that records movement suggest the following:

- In the age group of 6 to 11, almost half of boys (49 percent) and about a third of girls (35 percent) get the recommended amount of physical activity.
- Physical activity declines with age. While 42 percent of children ages 6 to 11 get 60 minutes a day of physical activity, only about 8 percent of adolescents ages 12 to 15 reach this goal.

At all ages, girls have lower levels of physical activity than boys.

## References

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Available online:  
[http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/obesity/ob\\_gdlns.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/obesity/ob_gdlns.htm)
- 2 Flegal KM, Carroll MD, Kit BK, Ogden CL. **Prevalence of obesity and trends in the distribution of body mass index among US adults, 1999–2010.** *Journal of the American Medical Association.* 2012; 307(5):491–97.  
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Available online:  
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## Research

The National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) conducts and supports a broad range of basic and clinical obesity research. More information about obesity research is available at <http://www.obesityresearch.nih.gov>.

Clinical trials are research studies involving people. Clinical trials look at safe and effective new ways to prevent, detect, or treat disease. Researchers also use clinical trials to look at other aspects of care, such as improving the quality of life for people with chronic illnesses. To learn more about clinical trials, why they matter, and how to participate, visit the NIH Clinical Research Trials and You website at <http://www.nih.gov/health/clinicaltrials>. For information about current studies, visit <http://www.ClinicalTrials.gov>.

## Resources

### Additional Reading from the Weight-control Information Network

The following publication is available online at <http://www.win.niddk.nih.gov/publications> and also by calling WIN toll-free at 1-877-946-4627:

- **Bariatric Surgery for Severe Obesity** explains how this operation on the stomach and/or intestines helps patients with extreme obesity to lose weight. Patients may use this fact sheet to talk about this option with their health care providers. This fact sheet explains which patients might choose this option and describes the different types of bariatric surgery (available online at <http://www.win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/gastric.htm>).

### Additional Reading from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- **Obesity and Socioeconomic Status in Adults: United States, 2005-2008**  
<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db50.htm>
- **Obesity and Socioeconomic Status in Children and Adolescents: United States, 2005-2008**  
<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db51.htm>
- **Prevalence of Obesity in the United States, 2009-2010**  
<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db82.htm>

### More Resources

- **National Diabetes Education Program**  
<http://www.yourdiabetesinfo.org>
- **National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse**  
<http://diabetes.niddk.nih.gov>
- **National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES)**  
<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhanes.htm>
- **National Health Interview Survey (NHIS)**  
<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis.htm>
- **Online BMI Calculators**  
**Adults:** [http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/adult\\_BMI/english\\_bmi\\_calculator/bmi\\_calculator.html](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/adult_BMI/english_bmi_calculator/bmi_calculator.html)  
**Children and teens:** <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/dnpabmi/Calculator.aspx>

## Weight-control Information Network

1 WIN Way  
Bethesda, MD 20892-3665  
Phone: 202-828-1025  
Toll-free number: 1-877-946-4627  
Fax: 202-828-1028  
Email: [WIN@info.niddk.nih.gov](mailto:WIN@info.niddk.nih.gov)  
Internet: <http://www.win.niddk.nih.gov>



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The Weight-control Information Network (WIN) is a national information service of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). WIN provides the general public, health professionals, and the media with science-based, up-to-date, culturally relevant materials and tips. Topics include how to consume healthy foods and beverages, barriers to physical activity, portion control, and eating and physical activity myths.

Both NIDDK scientists and outside experts review WIN fact sheets. This fact sheet was also reviewed by Cheryl Fryar, M.S.P.H., and Cynthia Ogden, Ph.D., M.R.P., both of the National Center for Health Statistics at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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You may also find additional information about this topic by visiting MedlinePlus at <http://www.medlineplus.gov>.

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