

How does weight affect your health?

We all know that we need to stay on top of our weight to stay healthy, but do we really understand why? Many people assume that the skinnier you are, the healthier you must be. However, that's not necessarily true. Maintaining a healthy weight differs from person to person, and the goal is to find the right weight for you.

Here's what you need to know about your weight and how it can affect your health.

Weight and High Blood Pressure

One of the biggest concerns many health professionals have for their overweight patients is the risk of high blood pressure or hypertension. According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)¹, people who are overweight or obese have a higher risk of developing high blood pressure and other health issues related to that. If high blood pressure is not controlled, you could end up with kidney issues, heart disease or even suffer a stroke.

If you have high blood pressure, your doctor may recommend that you lose weight to try and get it under control. Losing the extra pounds will help you to be more active, alleviate stress on your cardiovascular system and usually improve your diet in general—all things that will keep hypertension in check.

Weight and Diabetes

Although some people are born with Type 1 diabetes, which has nothing to do with their weight, more and more people are developing Type 2 diabetes later in life. This epidemic is directly connected to the increasing prevalence of obesity, according to the [Obesity Action Coalition](#)². Being excessively overweight can cause the body to either not produce insulin properly or not use it as intended, resulting in higher sugar levels in your blood.

When people with Type 2 diabetes experience high blood sugar levels regularly, it can eventually lead to:

- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Nerve damage
- Kidney damage
- Vision problems
- Depression

With the risks associated with weight-related insulin resistance, people with Type 2 diabetes have much more to worry about than just their weight. The long-term damage to the body can

be devastating. The good news is Type 2 diabetes is reversible in most cases. Diet and exercise for weight loss are often enough to keep blood sugars at a normal level. Some patients will also have to take insulin to help with blood glucose regulation.

Obesity and Liver Damage

Another way excess weight can affect your health is by increasing your risk for liver disease. More specifically, fatty liver disease affects between 70% to 90% of people who are obese, according to an article published by [Harvard Health](#)³. Previously, fatty liver disease was mainly found in people who would drink alcohol excessively. However, it is much more prevalent today due to the rise in obesity and diabetes in the general population.

When fat molecules start to build up in the liver, the result is fatty liver disease. Characterized by inflammation and tissue damage, it can lead to even more serious health issues if not addressed. As Harvard Health describes, the most effective treatment is to lose weight and exercise. Patients will need to practice strict dieting and exercise regimens to get their fatty liver disease under control.

Obesity and Osteoarthritis

As you can imagine, carrying around excess weight will eventually take a toll on bones and joints. Mainly, a person's hips and knees suffer as they struggle to support the extra body weight. The weight presses down on the bones, causing them to wear down the cartilage between the joints. This condition is known as osteoarthritis.

When the cartilage in the hip and knee joints is worn down completely, the bones begin rubbing against each other, causing pain, swelling, stiffness and irritation. The first thing most doctors will recommend for patients suffering from osteoarthritis is to lose weight.

The goal of losing weight is to reduce the pressure on the bones to ease the symptoms and prevent the condition from getting worse. Water aerobics and swimming are popular ways to burn calories without putting too much strain on sore joints.

Risks of Being Underweight

On the other end of the spectrum is being underweight. Again, being thin doesn't always mean you're healthy. In fact, being too thin in itself can pose its own risks to your health. According to [Medical News Today](#)⁴, risks of being underweight include:

- Problems with skin, hair and teeth
- Anemia
- Chronic fatigue
- Osteoporosis
- Impaired growth in children and adolescents

- Preterm labor
- Infertility
- Frequent common illnesses

If you're having issues keeping weight on your body and suffer from some of these conditions, you should have a discussion with your doctor. They may want to run some tests to check your current health, including a blood test and bone density scan.

Find the Right Weight for You

To summarize, you should find a healthy weight that's right for you if you want to avoid these risks and issues. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle that includes eating right, exercising regularly, staying hydrated and getting preventative scans are crucial to living a long life. Even if you suffer from obesity now, it's never too late to take control of your weight!

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Sources:

¹Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *The Health Effects of Overweight and Obesity*. Retrieved 23 March 2021 from <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/effects/index.html>

²Obesity Action Coalition. *Understanding Obesity and Type 2 Diabetes*. Retrieved 23 March 2021 from <https://www.obesityaction.org/get-educated/public-resources/brochures-guides/understanding-obesity-and-type-2-diabetes-brochure/>

³Harvard Health Publishing. (13 October 2020). *When the liver gets fatty*. Retrieved 23 March 2021 from <https://www.health.harvard.edu/diseases-and-conditions/when-the-liver-gets-fatty>

⁴Medical News Today. *What are the risks of being underweight?* Retrieved 23 March 2021 from <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/321612#when-is-a-person-underweight>