



Benefits of Weight Loss

OBESITY is a complex chronic disease in which abnormal or excessive accumulation of body fat impairs health. Adult obesity rates have more than doubled since the 1980s — in the U.S. today, obesity affects over 42% of adults and 18% of youth.¹ Obesity and its related complications are major drivers of rising healthcare costs, diminished health-related quality of life, and the recent decline in U.S. life expectancy. This fact sheet is part of a series designed to provide basic information about the science of obesity and current strategies to address it.

What Amount of Weight Loss Results in Health Improvements?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 5-10% weight loss is associated with improved health outcomes and quality of life among persons with obesity.
- Clinically significant weight loss can be achieved through lifestyle intervention, drug therapy, and/or bariatric surgery.
- Weight loss can be beneficial, not only for an individual's health, but also for their financial wellbeing. Those who lose weight could save hundreds or thousands of dollars, depending on their BMI.

Research shows that modest weight loss (5-10% of baseline weight) is associated with improved health outcomes and a reduction in healthcare costs and risk factors for chronic disease, including lower blood glucose levels, lower blood pressure, and reduced cholesterol levels.²

- According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) guidelines, treatment of obesity should focus on producing slow, progressive weight loss with a weight-loss goal of 10% of baseline weight in the first 6 months.³
- NHLBI recommends that after the initial weight loss goal is reached, patients should focus on weight maintenance or additional weight loss, as advised by their primary care provider.³

Evidence suggests that a small amount of intentional weight loss is associated with lower all-cause mortality rates among men and women.⁴

- Modest weight loss achieved through lifestyle interventions is particularly effective for reducing the risk of developing type 2 diabetes.⁵
 - Results from the Diabetes Prevention Program showed that participants who received lifestyle interventions (including intensive individual counseling and motivational support on diet, exercise and behavior modification) achieved an average 58% reduction in their risk of developing diabetes
 - During a Diabetes Prevention Program follow up, researchers found that after fifteen years diabetes incidence was reduced by 27% in the participants who received lifestyle interventions compared to those who received no intervention⁶
- The intentional use of behavioral interventions to improve health-related quality of life has been shown to produce beneficial effects, including a lower mortality rate.⁷
 - Improvements in health-related quality of life may not depend only on weight loss but may also result from lifestyle changes such as an improved diet and increased physical activity

