**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 1 in 3 adults and almost 1 in 5 youth. 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.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Obesity is the leading risk factor for type-2 diabetes and osteoarthritis.
- Obesity is a major risk factor for heart disease and hypertension.
- Obesity is causally linked to 13 different cancers.
- 5 to 10% reductions in body weight can decrease chronic disease risk among persons with obesity.

### LEARN MORE

- Osteoarthritis
- Obesity-Related Cancers
- Cancer in Young Adults

### What Chronic Diseases are Associated with Obesity?

#### DIABETES

- Research has shown that losing weight can significantly reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes. A 5-7% weight loss together with moderate levels of physical activity (e.g. walking 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week) decreased the number of new type 2 diabetes cases by 58% among people at risk for diabetes.

#### HEART DISEASE

- Over 80% of patients with coronary heart disease (CHD) have overweight or obesity. Although obesity is sometimes considered a minor CHD risk factor, weight loss can reduce major risk factors like high blood pressure (hypertension), insulin resistance, diabetes mellitus, and dyslipidemia. Obesity increases the risk for hypertension, which damages arteries in the heart, brain, kidneys, and eyes. If average BMI is reduced by 5 percent by 2030, over 5 million Americans could be spared from developing obesity-related hypertension.

#### CANCER

- Obesity-related cancers include endometrial, esophageal adenocarcinoma, gastric cardia, liver, kidney, multiple myeloma, meningioma, pancreatic, colorectal, gallbladder, breast, ovarian and thyroid cancers.
- According to the CDC, approximately 55% of cancer diagnoses for women and 24% of cancer diagnoses for men are associated with overweight and obesity.
- In 2014, the American Cancer Society calculated that 123,350 new cancer cases were associated with excess body weight in the United States.
Approximately 1 in 4 women and 1 in 8 men gain 44 pounds or more between the ages of 18 and 55 years. New research suggests that preventing excessive weight gain during this period may be a promising target for intervention.

Weight gain ≥ 44 pounds during early to middle adulthood significantly increases chronic disease risk

STROKE
- Obesity is associated with cardiometabolic conditions that increase individual long-term risk of heart disease and stroke, including:
  - high blood pressure
  - high levels of harmful blood fats (triglycerides)
  - high levels of “bad cholesterol” (low-density lipoprotein, LDL)
  - low levels of “good cholesterol” (high-density lipoprotein, HDL)

OSTEOARTHRITIS
- Obesity is a major risk factor for development of osteoarthritis (OA), particularly of the knee.
  - Three-quarters of people with OA have overweight or obesity
  - Adults with obesity are up to four times more likely to develop OA of the knee than adults without obesity

REFERENCES