

healthflash

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Am I Obese?

Obesity is spreading rapidly in the United States, affecting about one-third of all Americans. The most common method used to diagnose obesity is to do a comparison of height and weight, which is called Body Mass Index (BMI). If you take a look at the height and weight comparisons in the attached BMI chart, you can get an idea of what is considered obese. People who are obese are at greater risk for many serious health problems including diabetes, coronary artery disease (hardening of the arteries), high cholesterol, stroke, high blood pressure, gall bladder disease, arthritis, sleep apnea and possibly cancer.

Although obesity is a very serious health condition, it is also preventable...and even better, it is reversible! So, what can you do to improve your health?? Here are two easy steps:

- 1. EXERCISE.** Exercising is a first step to losing weight, and should become a part of your regular routine. Doing just 30 minutes of aerobic exercise three times a week is a great help...if you're sweating, it's working!
- 2. EAT HEALTHY** You may have heard something on TV, or saw the headlines in the newspaper: "City says fewer 'trans fats' in restaurant food!" Trans-fats have been shown to have absolutely no nutritional value, and have been linked to dangerous diseases such as obesity. The city may be looking to help you out, but here's how YOU can avoid trans-fats and start improving your health:
 - **Oils.** When you MUST cook with oil, be sure to use Olive or Canola oil. If you can, try steaming or baking your food.
 - **Soft is better.** Use soft margarines and butters (liquid, tub, or spray), instead of sticks.
 - **Eat fish!** Most fish are lower in saturated fat than meat.
 - **Trim the fat.** Choose lean meats.
 - **Ask before you order.** When at a restaurant, ask which fats are being used.
 - **Lower your cholesterol!** Limit organ meats, fried foods, egg yolks, and full-fat dairy products.

In order to maintain a healthy diet, you want to be sure to eat foods like vegetables, fruits, whole grains (such as brown rice, bran cereal, or whole wheat bread), fat-free or low-fat milk products, poultry and beans. It is important to stay away from things like soda, fried foods and potato chips, as well as sugary cereal and fruit punch which are high in added sugar. Don't forget that whatever food you choose, you need to eat a sensible portion...just say "NO" to "Super Size".

If you or someone you know is obese, the staff of the William F. Ryan Community Health Network are here to help you and your family develop a weight management plan, and provide further education on how to prevent obesity and/or a chronic disease resulting from obesity.