



live well, work well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home, and life—brought to you by the insurance and healthcare specialists at FAS-EBA, Inc..

# Health Watch: The Obesity Epidemic

America is struggling with an obesity epidemic. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, 30 percent of U.S. adults aged twenty and over (over sixty million people) are obese; and, the number of overweight people has more than tripled since 1980.

Our collective “battle of the bulge” accounts for approximately 9.4 percent of national healthcare expenditures. Individuals and businesses are struggling to pay for medical services to care for overweight or obese patients, along with the costs related to decreased productivity, restricted activity, absenteeism, and the loss of future income due to premature death.

## Changes in Lifestyle, Increasing Waistlines

The vast improvements in productivity and efficiency over the course of our modern history, and particularly in the last two decades, have brought major changes to our culture and lifestyle. Expanding technology has led to a wealth of labor and time-saving products that have greatly improved our daily lives (cars, elevators, computers, dishwashers, televisions, and so much more). But, technology’s influence on the American lifestyle is believed to be one of the factors driving the obesity epidemic. Now, Americans are faced with an extraordinary amount of fast, convenient food options with colossal portion sizes. At the same time, we’ve become a sedentary society in which technology has eliminated much of the need for physical exertion during our work and leisure time.

## The Energy Equation

If you’re looking to lose weight or maintain a healthy weight, you need to understand the very basic connection between the energy (calories) your body

takes in (through the foods you eat and the beverages you drink) and the energy your body uses (through the activities you do).

We need to consume calories to produce energy for daily functions such as breathing, digestion, and everything else we do. There is a right number of calories you should take in depending on whether you are trying to gain, maintain, or lose weight. In order to lose weight, you need to use more calories than you take in. If your goal is to maintain a healthy weight, you need to balance the calories you use with those you take in.

And, don’t forget the other side of the equation: physical activity. Physical activity is defined as any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that results in an expenditure of energy. Daily physical activity is important to your overall health and fitness, and it helps control your body weight by balancing “calories in” with “calories out.” In order to be effective, you need moderate-intensity physical activity at least thirty minutes per day, most days of the week. Increasing the intensity or the amount of time that you are physically active can have a variety of health benefits, including weight loss.

## Health Consequences

Overweight and obesity can lead to serious health consequences and increased risks for life-threatening conditions, including the following:

- Type 2 diabetes
- Coronary heart disease
- Hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Stroke
- Gallbladder disease
- Some cancers (endometrial, post-menopausal breast, colon, gall bladder, prostate, and kidney cancers)
- Osteoarthritis
- High blood cholesterol
- Sleep apnea and respiratory problems
- Psychological disorders
- Premature death
- Reproductive complications

Losing as little as 5 – 15 percent of total body weight in a person who is overweight or obese reduces the risk factors for some diseases (particularly heart disease), can lower blood pressure and blood sugar, and can improve cholesterol levels.



## Did you know...

Overweight and physical inactivity account for 300,000 premature deaths in the United States each year (second only to tobacco-related deaths).

*This brochure is for informational purposes only and is not intended as medical advice. For further information, please consult a medical professional.*

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