

Weight Management for a Healthy Heart

Being overweight puts you at greater risk

Overweight women are at greater risk for developing heart disease even if they have no other risk factors. But being overweight also contributes to some of the risk factors associated with heart disease, including high total or LDL cholesterol, high blood pressure, and diabetes.

What is a healthy weight for me?

Although there is no exact answer to this question, you are considered to be at a healthy weight when you do not have and are not likely to develop weight-related diseases such as high total or LDL cholesterol, diabetes, and high blood pressure.

Currently, more than 50% of adults in the United States are overweight. Why so many? The changes that come with aging — decreasing activity level & basal metabolic rate, and changing distribution of body fat — can contribute to becoming overweight. In addition, emotional illnesses, like depression, may contribute to overeating and weight gain.

Is my weight putting me at risk for heart disease?

There are two main ways to determine if your weight puts you at risk for developing heart disease.

- **Your Body Mass Index or BMI** is a reliable indicator of your total body fat, which can contribute to heart disease. Your BMI is based on your height (in inches or meters) and weight (in pounds or kilograms). To calculate your exact BMI, use one of the following equations:

- If you know your weight in pounds and your height in inches:

$$\text{BMI} = (\text{pounds} \times 700) \text{ divided by } (\text{inches squared})$$

- If you know your weight in kilograms and your height in meters:

$$\text{BMI} = (\text{kilograms}) \text{ divided by } (\text{meters squared})$$

A desirable BMI is between 18.5 and 24.9. A BMI of 25 to less than 30 is considered overweight, while a BMI of 30 or higher is defined as obesity.

- Physicians believe that the place in which your body stores extra fat also predicts your risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes. For example, the measurement of your waist, or waist circumference, is a reliable indicator for your abdominal fat. The risk for heart disease increases with a waist circumference of more than 40 inches for men and more than 35 inches for women.

Start Fresh Weight Management Program

Meets Tuesdays, 6:30-8:30 p.m. and Thursdays from 6:30-7:00 p.m.

Brown Cardiovascular Institute at Silver Cross Hospital

1300 Copperfield Ave., Joliet

This 7-week program for severely overweight individuals includes comprehensive weight management discussion, personal action plan, diet instructions and exercise. A doctor's approval is required. Cost is \$160. Call 1-888-660-HEAL (4325) for more information.



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How to manage my weight to reduce risk for heart disease

Change your focus from weight loss to weight management. Weight management includes eating and activity habits that reduce your risk for certain diseases, including heart disease. Normally, cardiovascular endurance and muscle strength decline after age 30 by about 1% and 6%, respectively. You can slow the speed of decline by being physically active, which includes an exercise program and an active daily life. Regular exercise can improve your blood cholesterol and triglyceride levels, reduce blood sugar, and improve other risk factors for disease. Aim to be physically active every day. You can be fit even if you are overweight or obese.

Eat Sensibly

If you have been struggling with your weight, you may have developed some poor eating habits or have negative ideas about food. Many people classify foods as "good" & "bad" based on their calorie or nutrient content. All kinds of foods can fit into a healthy diet. You are working toward a life-long goal of developing healthy eating habits. Any positive change you make will improve your health.

Weigh Yourself Less Often

Your weight can fluctuate by a few pounds from one day to another. However, over the long run, most people's weight stays fairly stable. The fluctuations you see from day to day are changes in the amount of water in your body. The adult body is about 60% water, so small changes in water balance can easily alter body weight. Because of daily fluctuations in your weight, you should not weigh yourself every day. Instead, rely more on how you feel and how your clothes fit. If you want to monitor your weight, weigh yourself no more than once a week.

Take care. Take charge. Take heart.

Heart disease is the #1 killer of women. It is a greater threat than all cancers combined. Since 1984, more women than men have died each year of heart disease.

Silver Cross Hospital's Women's HeartAdvantage™ Program is committed to helping women with heart disease. But while there is much a hospital, its physicians and nurses can do, we can make an even greater difference together with you. Take care of yourself. Know what your risk is. Know what your heart health indicators are. And then take charge. Choose to quit smoking, to eat better, to exercise more, and to improve your health. Because women of America, this is your life. We hope you'll put your heart into it.

For more information on Silver Cross Hospital's Women's HeartAdvantage™ Program or a referral to a Women's HeartAdvantage™ certified physician, call 1-888-660-HEAL (4325) or visit www.silvercross.org.



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