

# HEART DISEASE, OBESITY AND WEIGHT LOSS: WHAT TO KNOW

## Losing Weight Is a Smart Step Towards Risk Reduction



**Y**our weight and your risk for **heart disease** are connected. But that doesn't mean being overweight guarantees that you'll have heart problems. There are ways to reduce your risk for a cardiac event and weight loss may be one of them. But first it's important to learn the facts about **heart disease and weight loss**.

### What Is Heart Disease?

**Heart disease** is a number of abnormal conditions that affect the heart and the blood vessels in the heart. There are many different types of heart disease, but common forms include **coronary artery disease**, **heart failure**, and **arrhythmia**. The most common form of heart disease is coronary artery disease, a narrowing or blockage of coronary arteries, which is the major reason people have **heart attacks**.

### Heart Disease Facts and Figures

According to the **American Heart Association** statistics compiled in 2018, cardiovascular disease accounts for nearly 836,546 deaths or about 1 of every 3 deaths in the US. It remains the leading cause of death in this country. Roughly 2,300 Americans die of cardiovascular

disease each day, an average of 1 death every 38 seconds. Approximately every 40 seconds, an American will have a heart attack. The average age for a first heart attack is 65.6 years for males and 72.0 years for females.

The report also notes that someone in the US has a stroke about once every 40 seconds. Stroke accounts for one out of every 19 deaths in the US each year.

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About 92.1 million American adults are currently living with some form of either cardiovascular disease or after-effects of a stroke. Nearly half of all black adults have some form of cardiovascular disease, 47.7 percent of females and 46.0 percent of males.

### The Heart Disease and Weight Loss Connection

Heart disease and weight loss are closely **linked because your risk for heart disease** is associated with your weight. If you are overweight or obese, you may be at higher risk for the condition.

Medical experts consider obesity and being overweight to be a major risk factor for both coronary heart disease and heart attack. Being 20 percent overweight or more significantly increases your risk for developing heart disease, especially if you have a lot of abdominal fat. The American Heart Association has found that even if you have no other related health conditions, obesity itself increases risk of heart disease.

Being sedentary also causes your heart disease risk to increase. A sedentary lifestyle may be more dangerous for women. Inactive females are more likely to become diabetic, have high blood pressure and high cholesterol. All three of these conditions increase the chance of developing heart disease.

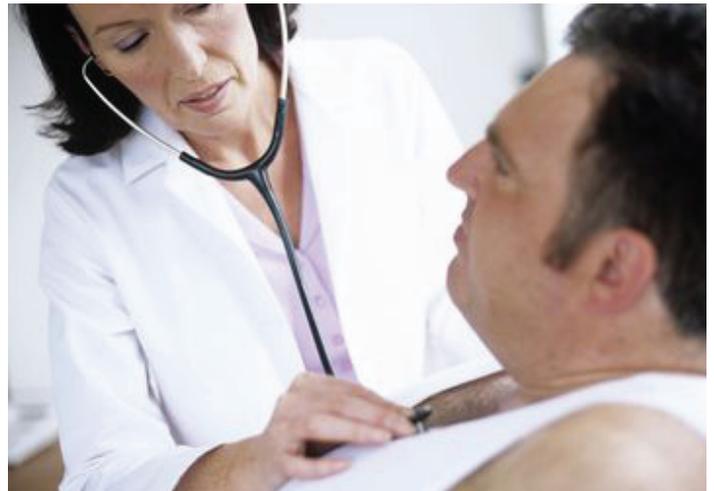
### Heart Disease and Weight Distribution

Your risk of developing heart disease may be higher depending on where you carry fat on your body. If you are overweight or obese and carry most of your excess weight in your abdominal area (apple-shaped), your risk for heart disease is higher than that of a person who carries fat in the hips and thighs (pear-shaped). Apple-shaped individuals may also have other increased health risks including high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, diabetes, and stroke.

To find out if your waistline increases your risk of heart disease, you can [measure yourself with a measuring tape](#). You may need a partner to help you measure accurately. The measurement should be taken at the belly line. A high-risk waistline is 35 inches or higher for women and 40 inches or higher for men.

### Decrease Your Heart Disease Risk

You can't change certain risk factors for heart disease. For example, you can't change your family history. But you can change your weight. If you reduce your weight by just 10 percent, you can begin to [lower your risk of developing heart disease](#) and other obesity-related health problems.



In addition to managing your weight, you can reduce your chances of developing heart disease by controlling other related risk factors. Talk to your doctor about controlling your blood pressure, lowering your cholesterol, quitting smoking and getting enough exercise.

A healthy diet is also an important part of lowering your risk of heart disease. The American Heart Association recommends a diet that contains no more than 30 percent of daily calories from fat. For example, if you eat a diet of 2,000 calories per day, no more than 600 calories should come from fat.

### A Word From Verywell

Hearing that you have heart disease or that you are at risk for heart disease can feel scary when you hear it from a medical professional. But there are things you can do to manage or decrease your risk. Work together with your health care team, including your primary care provider, cardiologist, nutritional staff, and other support professionals (such as a physical therapist or behavioral health specialist) to get the care that you need to take small steps towards wellness. You may find that living a more active life and eating a nutritious diet will benefit you many ways—including reducing your risk for heart disease.