

SUPPORTING HEALTHY WEIGHT & PREVENTING OBESITY: Quick Action Guide



What Is Overweight and Obesity?

Overweight and obesity are conditions where excess body fat can harm a person's health. These conditions are defined by Body Mass Index (BMI), although health is influenced by many factors beyond BMI.

- Overweight is considered: BMI of 25 to 29.9
- Obesity is considered: BMI of 30+

Contributing Factors

Many factors influence weight and health—both genetic risk factors and structural conditions in our communities, or the everyday conditions where we live, play, and work. These factors prevent many historically disadvantaged communities from achieving their healthiest lives, including a lack of:

- Healthy, affordable food
- Safe places for recreation, play, and physical activity
- Quality health care and treatment options
- Stable income and economic resources
- Adequate sleep and stress support



Healthy Foods

Access to healthy, affordable food is important for preventing overweight, obesity, and other chronic diseases.

- **½ your plate** should be filled with colorful fruits and vegetables.
- **¼ of your plate** should be whole grains such as brown rice, whole-wheat pasta, quinoa, oats, or whole-grain bread.
- **¼ of your plate** should include lean protein sources like chicken, turkey, fish, lentils, tofu, or eggs.
- Drink water throughout the day (**about 4-6 cups** for most adults) and other healthy drinks and water-rich foods.



Safe Recreational Places for Physical Activity

Staying active supports overall health and can help prevent and manage overweight and obesity. Physical activity does not have to involve gyms or intense workouts, it can include simple, enjoyable movements that fit into daily life. All movement counts, whether it's exercise, dancing, active play, family activities, or simply sitting less during the day.

- **Aim for 150 minutes+ (2.5 hours)** of moderate physical activity each week for adults.
- **Aim for 180 minutes+ (3 hours)** of active play daily for young children ages 1–5 and 60 minutes+ (1 hour) of physical activity each day for children and teens ages 6–17.
- **Every day**, try to move your body throughout the day. Even light movement is good for your health.
- **Every week**, include strength-training activities (at least 2 days per week for adults and 3 days per week for teens), including muscle- and bone-strengthening activities such as climbing, push-ups, jumping, skipping, and running.



Sleep and Stress Management

Getting enough sleep and managing stress are important for maintaining a healthy weight and overall well-being.

- Aim for **7–9 hours** of sleep at night for adults.
- Aim for **12 hours+** of sleep for infants and toddlers, **9 hours+** for school-aged children, and **8–10 hours** for teens.
- Keep a consistent sleep schedule.
- Manage stress by taking breaks, talking to someone you trust, and using relaxation techniques like deep breathing.



Health Care Access

Access to health care can be limited by cost, transportation, insurance coverage, and discrimination.

- Getting regular check-ups and early care help prevent and manage chronic conditions.
- Low-cost care is available through community health centers, Medicaid and CHIP, and insurance marketplaces.



Economic Stability

Income, employment, housing, and cost of living affect access to food, health care, and other basic needs. Support programs, such as SNAP and WIC, housing assistance, and job resources, can help people meet their basic needs and improve their financial stability.



Weight Stigma

Weight stigma can show up in health care and other settings when people are treated unfairly because of their body size.

- Ask your health care provider to focus on your symptoms and overall health, not just your weight.
- Consider changing providers if you do not feel respected or heard.
- You can request a “no-weight visit” if being weighed is not necessary for your care.



Obesity Treatment

Seeking obesity treatment can be challenging, especially when there are high costs, limited insurance coverage, provider bias, and a lack of culturally responsive care. Insurance plans often do not cover obesity medications, leaving individuals and families unable to afford the care they need.

- Ask your provider for a full explanation of all treatment options.
- Check your insurance coverage for obesity-related services and medications.



AI in Obesity Care

Artificial intelligence (AI) is being used in health care to support obesity prevention and treatment. When developed responsibly, AI has the potential to enhance obesity care, advance health equity, and improve outcomes for diverse populations.

- AI can help identify health risks earlier.
- AI-powered tools can support nutrition, physical activity, sleep, and long-term health tracking.

Key Takeaways for Preventing and Managing Overweight and Obesity

Overweight and obesity are influenced by many factors, including genetic risk factors, access to healthy food, physical activity, health care, financial resources, sleep, and stress. Small, sustainable changes can improve health over time. Everyone deserves access to the resources, support, and care needed to live their healthiest lives.

To stay involved, click the code and join our **Monthly Health Leads Forum** ►

Questions? Contact us: healthequity@naacpnet.org

Find more resources, including the full Guide and tools at the NAACP Center for Health Equity resource page: [Supporting Healthy Weight & Preventing Obesity](#)

