

The 30 Pound Club

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Obesity Statistics

I don't think anyone is surprised that we adult Americans have maintained our body size the last few years, but I don't think ignoring it will make it go away either, so I wanted to write about this study. I also decided to tease out which of us are the heaviest based on gender and age. Let's see where you stand based on the latest national statistics on overweight and obesity published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Let's start with the average body mass index (BMI) for men and women. The average BMI for men is 28.7 and it's the same for women. I'm not sure that's the type of equality women want—to be able to say, "I'm just as fat as any man." When you put this average into numbers, that means the average adult is about 20 pounds overweight. Or maybe we're six inches too short. But since we're probably not going to grow taller, we'll have to own up to carrying too much weight.

Obesity is defined as a BMI greater than 30.0; the number of men and women at that level was about the same with about 36% of each gender classified as obese. It gets worse. About 15% of all men and 17% of all women had a BMI greater than 35.0. Still worse, about 5% of all men and 8% of all women have a BMI greater than 40.0—more than 100 pounds overweight!

Let's turn to age groups. The overall percentage of overweight and obese is 74.1% of all men and 64.5% of all women. The age group with the most overweight men are those 40-59 with 79.5% overweight. For women, it's the over-60 age group with 73.5% overweight.

So what message can we take from these statistics? At the end of the day, they're just numbers. It really comes down to our health. Working to lose weight and arrive at a normal BMI may be beyond what's possible for some of us, especially as we age. I don't see myself ever weighing less than 165 pounds in order to get to a BMI less than 25. But I can see myself at 175. It's been elusive for 40 years but one meal at a time, one workout at a time, it's happening—not fast enough to suit me, but what ever is? I hope you hang in there and grind it out with me; then we can truly say we're better than average, and those are bragging rights I'd really love to have.

One and Done.

What are you prepared to do today?

Dr. Chet

Reference: JAMA. 2012;307(5):doi:10.1001/jama.2012.39.

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