

FROM THE OFFICE OF DR.

Obesity and exercise

Obesity means having a body mass index (BMI) of 30 or higher. Being obese increases your risk of health problems including high blood pressure, diabetes, cholesterol, arthritis, cancer, and cardiovascular diseases such as stroke and heart attack. You can reduce these risks by losing weight.



The healthy way to lose weight is to eat fewer calories, eat less processed food and more whole foods, and exercise regularly. A dietitian can help you create a flexible and balanced eating plan to help you meet your goals.

When beginning an exercise plan, start slowly with a combination of aerobic, resistance, flexibility, and balance exercises. A combined aerobic and resistance exercise program will likely result in more weight loss than either alone.

- **Aerobic** exercises should be the foundation of your program. Choose exercises that involve large muscle groups, such as walking. Walking is the easiest way for most

people to start exercising, but you can also consider other exercises such as stationary bicycling, slow jogging, and water aerobics.

- **Resistance** training involves lifting weights using either weight machines or free weights (dumbbells).
- **Flexibility** exercises are a type of stretching that improves the movements of your muscles, joints, and ligaments.
- **Balance** exercises improve your stability and reduce the chance of falling or other injuries. These exercises can be done without any equipment. For example, with single-leg balance, you balance on one foot for 15 seconds. A stand-

sit involves standing up and sitting down without using your hands.

Your provider will design an exercise program for you that includes the frequency, intensity, time, and types of exercise. Typically, you'll want to lose about 10% of your weight over a 6-month period. Be sure to set SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely) to sustain the self-discipline required for long-term success. Also consider tracking your physical activity using a wearable device (eg, Fitbit) or a smartphone app. It lets you see your progress over time, helps you set new goals, and helps keep you motivated.



This information is provided by your physician and the *Cleveland Clinic Journal of Medicine*. It is not designed to replace a physician's medical assessment and judgment.

This page may be reproduced noncommercially to share with patients. Any other reproduction is subject to *Cleveland Clinic Journal of Medicine* approval. Bulk color reprints available by calling 216-444-2661.

For patient information on hundreds of health topics, visit the Center for Consumer Health Information website, www.clevelandclinic.org/health.