

Care Giving and Obesity

A Little Background Information...

- *What is Obesity?*
 - [Obesity](#) is a medical condition in which excess body fat has accumulated to the extent that it may have an adverse effect on health. The range of what qualifies as obese and overweight are determined by using weight and height to calculate a number called the “body mass index” (BMI). An adult with a BMI of 25-29.5 is considered overweight and an adult with a BMI of 30 or higher is considered obese. It is important to keep in mind that BMI is not an exact calculator of obesity. A health care provider would be able to give an accurate diagnosis after a consultation.
- *What causes Obesity?*
 - There are three agreed upon reasons that can cause obesity in an individual:
 - Environment- people make decisions based on their environment or community so this is why it’s important to create environments in these locations that make it easier to engage in physical activity and eat a healthy diet
 - Genetics- science has shown that genetics can either increase an individual’s susceptibility to obesity or directly cause obesity through disorders such as [Bardet-Biedl syndrome](#) and [Prader-Willi syndrome](#)
 - Other Factors (Diseases and Drugs)- Some illnesses can lead to weight gain (ex. Cushing’s disease). Certain drugs, such as steroids and some antidepressants may also cause weight gain.
 - It is possible to have multiple chronic conditions at one time. For example, 14.2% of adults in Missouri who were obese also had arthritis.
- *Health Consequences of Obesity*
 - Obesity can lead to many different serious and potentially life-threatening health issues, including: coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes, certain types of cancer, hypertension, stroke, liver and gallbladder disease, sleep apnea and respiratory problems, osteoarthritis, and gynecological problems

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What to Do After a Diagnosis...

- *How to Care for Family Members with Obesity*
 - Establish good communication with your parent or loved one as well as their health care provider
 - Know the options that are available for managing and treating their condition
- *Young Caregivers*
 - Oftentimes the child of a person diagnosed with obesity becomes their main caregiver. It is very important to keep in mind that these caregivers still be treated age appropriately. Some ways to do this include:
 - Keep things “normal”. Make sure they still have experiences outside of caregiving.
 - Watch for signs of stress, such as headaches, backaches and the inability to sleep or eat. Developing a support network with other caregivers can help ease the young caregiver’s burden.
 - Consider their duties a standard chore. Present chores as things that all family members do for each other to contribute, not because one member has too much pain to do them.
 - Choose their tasks wisely. Try to avoid making them uncomfortable by giving them age-appropriate duties.
- *College-age Caregivers*
 - One of the biggest problems that many young adult caregivers face is that they no longer live at home, making it more difficult to be there for their parent or loved one. Here are a few important things to remember about long-distance care:
 - Don’t feel guilty
 - Be willing to ask for help when you need it
 - Consider the possible needs that your parent will have
 - Get familiar with your parent’s community resources
- *Adult Caregivers*
 - Adult caregivers will oftentimes have to deal with the unique situations of either having to care for a parent while starting their own family or having a spouse with a chronic illness. If a parent is obese, the coping tips for an adult caregiver are the same as they are for college-age caregivers. Caring for a spouse, however, can present its own set of challenges. Ways to cope with having an obese spouse include:

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- It's ok to express negative emotions
- Have open and honest communication
- Handle the situation together as a team
- Accept support from family and friends
- Don't forget to take care of your own well-being

Thinking Ahead...

- *Are You at Risk for Obesity?*
 - Risk factors for obesity include:
 - Genetics
 - Inactivity
 - Unhealthy diet and eating habits
 - Family Lifestyle
 - Lack of sleep
 - Certain medications
 - Medical Problems
- *Ways to Prevent Obesity if You're at Risk*
 - Exercise regularly
 - Eat healthy meals and snacks
 - Monitor your weight regularly
 - Be consistent

Local Resources...

1. The Missouri Arthritis and Osteoporosis Program ([MAOP](#)) is dedicated to providing resources to anyone that has to deal with chronic diseases on a daily basis. An [online toolkit](#) is available that provides educational material about living with a chronic condition as well as resources for caregivers.
- There are seven Regional Arthritis Centers (RACs) throughout the state of Missouri. Each RAC offers classes that focus on different aspects of living with a chronic disease, including physical activity programs tailored for people with arthritis and chronic disease self-management courses.

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Work Cited

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