

Personal Training by Robert J. Bovee

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Is Fat Really That Bad?

We have been taught that it is dangerous to be overweight. Now some experts claim that fear is overblown. It is not fatness but fitness that counts. If you are **5 feet 6** and weigh **155** pounds, many doctors would consider you ten to fifteen pounds over your ideal weight. There are some who might say you are thirty pounds over and at risk for numerous health problems. These opinions have more to do with culture and society than health itself.

Many experts now question whether obesity really is a death sentence. Weight may not be a useful tool by which to measure health.

The doomsday message about fat is based on numerous studies showing an association between gaining weight and piling up risk factors for several diseases. By all accounts, the most powerful association is with adult-onset diabetes, rates of which are increasing at an unbelievable rate. Excess fat tissue is strongly related to insulin resistance, the metabolic condition that can prompt diabetes.

Studies have not demonstrated with any consistency that obesity per se aside from such related conditions as high blood pressure or high cholesterol is a risk factor for heart disease. The cause-and-effect relationship is far less clear than it is with diabetes.

Fat-and-health revisionists believe that too many Americans are being fooled by weight charts and bathroom scales. The Metropolitan Life insurance company's height-weight tables were the standard for years, but more people are using the BMI, body-mass index. You can compute your own BMI by dividing your weight in kilograms by the square of your height in meters. A BMI greater than twenty-seven is about where you see overweight turn into obesity.

More pertinent even than BMI is where you carry your fat. Apple-shaped people carry much of their fat above the waist. This fat breaks down and enters the bloodstream readily, which may lead to clogged arteries, high blood pressure and other problems. Pear-shaped people carry much of their fat on the hips and thighs. Some researchers call this "good fat" because it is associated with high levels of HDL, the "good" cholesterol.

It is important to lose excess abdominal fat, but not to worry about flabby upper arms and thunder thighs. If you start healthy eating and exercise, the first thing you will notice is that your clothes will fit better, especially around the waist. When people, especially fat people, lose even a small amount of weight, they reap extraordinary health benefits.

As dieting is sent to the shadows, exercise is taking its place in the spotlight. No expert has a bad word to say about physical activity, which improves every aspect of mental and bodily health.

For more information, please contact Robert J. Bovee at **(585) 330-0614**.