

Male Obesity: Not a Weighting Game

It's no secret that overweight and obesity are big problems in the United States. Obesity affects men and women about equally. If you are obese, you are at a higher risk of developing many adverse health conditions: gallbladder disease, gallstones, liver disease, Type 2 diabetes, gout, osteoarthritis, certain types of cancer, heart disease and stroke, sleep apnea, high blood pressure. And guys... that's just the tip of the iceberg!



Does this tux make me look fat?

Forget the cosmetic factor; obesity is disastrous to health. Men rarely worry about their weight, and with a more carefree attitude, are more likely to eat what they want without paying heed to daily intake or long-term consequences. Even if they are overweight and they know it is bad for them, men will rarely take steps to overcome obesity until they get a wake-up call in the form of a heart attack or a diagnosis of diabetes.

Since men are the primary breadwinners in most households, they bear the weight of worrying about project deadlines, the promotion, the mortgage and bills and the financial and future wellbeing of their families. Such high levels of stress and demanding schedules can make even ten minutes of exercise a day seem like a daunting task. Add to that the responsibility of making healthy food choices through the day and most men would rather not bother at all. Additionally, society and the media have always focused more on women looking good and maintaining their weight. So, men rarely have any motivation to watch their weight. While overweight and obesity affect men and women in equal numbers, they take a special toll on male hormones, sexuality, and prostate health.

Obesity and testosterone

Simply stated - obesity lowers testosterone levels. A [study](#) of 1,667 men ages 40 and above found that each one-point increase in body mass index (BMI) was associated with a 2% decrease in testosterone. Another study of 1,862 men ages 30 and above found that waist circumference was an even stronger predictor of low testosterone levels than BMI. A four-inch increase in waist size increased a man's odds of having a low testosterone level by 75%; for comparison, 10 years of aging increased the odds by only 36%.

Erectile dysfunction

Although men with erectile dysfunction (ED) often blame testosterone, hormonal disorders account for only 3% of ED. But even with normal testosterone levels, men who are obese have an increased risk of ED. Several studies have linked abdominal obesity to ED.

One study reported that having a BMI of 28 (overweight but not obese) increased a man's odds of developing ED by over 90%.



BPH, PSA and Prostate Cancer –a numbers game!

Benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) becomes more common as men get older. It also becomes more common as men gain girth. A study of 25,892 men found that waist circumference was strongly associated with a man's risk of developing BPH symptoms. Ultrasounds and MRIs have been used to measure the prostate gland and the findings are in – men with bigger bellies have bigger prostates! Oddly enough, while obesity seems to result in a larger prostate, it also lowers PSA (prostate-specific antigen) levels. While this may indeed sound like good news, think

again! Studies found that PSA levels were lower *not* because their prostates produced less PSA, but because obesity increases blood volume, so PSA is more diluted in the blood. Because obesity lowers PSA levels, it can make it harder for doctors to use PSA measurements to detect prostate cancer in overweight guys.

Why weight?

In today's America, being overweight is the norm — but it's not normal. In fact, this common problem is one of the things that make diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke, heart attack, and arthritis so common. And if that's not bad enough, it also increases the risk of male maladies, ranging from erectile dysfunction to BPH and prostate cancer.

Take heart in the fact that it is never too late to begin your fight against obesity. A few small steps starting today can ensure a longer, a healthier life and more fulfilling life. Good health is not a struggle, nor it is an extraordinary feat. Healthy living is about understanding what your body needs and what is good for it. It's the manly thing to do, and the time to start is now. When it comes to improving your health, don't weight!