Nutrition and Weight Gain

**Nutrition**

It is important for people with disabilities to get proper nutrition. Some of the conditions that cause paralysis can also cause swallowing difficulties. Food may need to be pureed or made soft in those instances. While there are many fitness opportunities available to wheelchair users and people with paralysis, it may still be more difficult for people with mobility issues to maintain proper weight by exercising. People with mobility issues may also need specially adapted eating utensils.

**What Are Overweight and Obesity?**

The terms "overweight" and "obesity" refer to a person's overall body weight and whether it's too high. Overweight is having extra body weight from muscle, bone, fat, and/or water. Obesity is having a high amount of extra body fat.

The most useful measure of overweight and obesity is body mass index (BMI). BMI is based on height and weight and is used for adults, children, and teens. For more information about BMI, see “How Are Overweight and Obesity Diagnosed” at [http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/obe/diagnosis.html](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/obe/diagnosis.html).

**Overview**

Millions of Americans and people worldwide are overweight or obese. Being overweight or obese puts you at risk for many diseases and conditions. The more body fat that you have and the more you weigh, the more likely you are to develop:

- Coronary heart disease (also called coronary artery disease)
- High blood pressure
- Type 2 diabetes
- Gallstones
- Breathing problems
- Certain cancers
Your weight is the result of many factors. These factors include environment, family history and genetics, metabolism (the way your body changes food and oxygen into energy), behavior or habits, and more. You can't change some factors, such as family history. However, you can change other factors, such as your lifestyle habits.

You can take steps to prevent or treat overweight or obesity. Follow a healthy eating plan and keep your calorie needs in mind. Do physical activity regularly and try to limit the amount of time that you're inactive.

Weight-loss medicines and surgery also are options for some people who need to lose weight if lifestyle changes aren't enough.

**Outlook**

Reaching and staying at a healthy weight is a long-term challenge for people who are overweight or obese. But it also can be a chance to lower your risk of other serious health problems. With the right treatment and motivation, it's possible to lose weight and lower your long-term disease risk.

**Source:** [http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/obe/](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/obe/)
National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute

**Websites**

**Sites with general information on nutrition and weight management**

[http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/)
American Heart Association (AHA)

[http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/FatsAndOils/Fats-Oils_UCM_001084_SubHomePage.jsp](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/FatsAndOils/Fats-Oils_UCM_001084_SubHomePage.jsp)
**American Heart Association: Fats & Oils**
This page has information on fats and oils and includes the AHA’s Meet the Fats campaign which is designed to help people minimize trans fats in their diet without increasing consumption of more saturated fats.

[http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/NutritionCenter/Knowing-Your-Fats_UCM_305976_Article.jsp#.TvJIMnrQiuI](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/NutritionCenter/Knowing-Your-Fats_UCM_305976_Article.jsp#.TvJIMnrQiuI)
**American Heart Association: Knowing Your Fats**
This page has information on various kinds of fats.

[http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/FatsAndOils/Fats101/Fats-and-Oils-AHA-Recommendation_UCM_316375_Article.jsp#.TvJIkJrQiuJ](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/FatsAndOils/Fats101/Fats-and-Oils-AHA-Recommendation_UCM_316375_Article.jsp#.TvJIkJrQiuJ)
**American Heart Association: Fats & Oils – AHA Recommendation**
This page lists recommendations regarding the use of fats and oils, as well as links to information on various kinds of fats and cholesterol.
Health Canada - Santé Canada: Canada’s Food Guide
This site has information and tools to help people maintain healthy eating and activity habits.

This document provides information and advice to help people choose a healthy eating pattern to achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

http://www.kidshealth.org/kid/stay_healthy/food/labels.html
Kids Health: Figuring Out Food Labels
This page has audio and text to help children understand food labels.

http://lpi.oregonstate.edu/infocenter/foods/grains/gigl.html
Linus Pauling Institute: Micronutrient Information Center – Glycemic Index and Glycemic Load
This page has information on the body’s response to carbohydrates, measured through glycemic index, and disease prevention. The Micronutrient Information Center’s pages on vitamins, minerals, supplements and other nutrients are easily accessible through the index on the left.

http://fnic.nal.usda.gov/
U.S. Department of Agriculture: Food and Nutrition Information Center

Food and Nutrition Information Center: Weight and Obesity
This page has information and resources on a variety of topics related to weight and obesity, including treatment and prevention guidelines and practical advice for weight control.

http://www.choosemyplate.gov/
U.S. Department of Agriculture: MyPlate
This site has information on healthy eating, weight management and physical activity. MyPlate replaced the food pyramid in June 2011.

https://craighospital.org/resources/topics/diet
Craig Hospital: Diet Resources

http://www.fda.gov/
U.S. Food and Drug Administration

  http://www.fda.gov/Food/IngredientsPackagingLabeling/LabelingNutrition/ucm274593.htm
U.S. Food and Drug Administration: How to Understand and Use the Nutrition Fact Labels

http://www.fda.gov/Food/IngredientsPackagingLabeling/LabelingNutrition/default.htm
U.S. Food and Drug Administration: Labeling & Nutrition

http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm153239.htm
U.S. Food and Drug Administration: Dietary Supplements

Sites with information specific to people with disabilities and/or spinal cord injury

www.adaevidencelibrary.com/topic.cfm?cat=3485
American Dietetic Association Evidence-Based Library: Spinal Cord Injury Guidelines
The guidelines will help clinicians determine the nutrition needs of their patients with SCI.

http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/obesity.html
CDC: Disability and Obesity
This page has information on overweight and obesity, including recommendations for healthy eating and physical activity.

CDC: Overweight and Obesity Among People with Disabilities Factsheet

CDC: Tip Sheet on Obesity in People with Disabilities by State
“Obesity and People with Disabilities: A Tip Sheet for Public Health Professionals”

http://craighospital.hostworks.net/Left-Nav/Specialty-Services/SCI---TBI-Health-Info/Education-Modules/Diet
Craig Hospital: Diet
Craig specializes in the treatment of people with spinal cord injury and brain injury.

http://easytositewwwcookbook.com/
Easy to Swallow Cookbook
This cookbook is for anyone who has difficulty chewing. The brainchild of Brenda Brady, the book was inspired by her experiences with mouth cancer. The softback book contains 40 pages of recipes and tips.

http://www.mealtimepartners.com
Mealtime Partners
1137 S.E. Parkway
Azle, TX 76020
Mealtime Partners makes products that facilitate independent eating and drinking for people with disabilities who cannot independently feed themselves.

http://www.nchpad.org/

National Center for Health, Physical Activity and Disability (NCHPAD)
400 Ridgeway Dr.
Birmingham, AL 35209
Phone: 800-900-8086

NCHPAD is positioned to effect change in health promotion/obesity management among people with disabilities through its history of providing advocacy, services and programs to numerous organizations and people throughout the country on the topics of health and physical activity in people with disabilities.

http://www.nchpad.org/1143/5653/Obesity~~Cardiovascular~Disease~in~Children~with~and~without~Disabilities~~and~Prevention

NCHPAD: Children with Disabilities and Obesity
This fact sheet discusses the risks of obesity and the benefits of physical activity.

http://www.nchpad.org/Individuals~Caregivers

NCHPAD: Nutrition
This page lists many articles on nutrition for people with disabilities.

http://www.nchpad.org/sci/

e-Health Dietary Points Calculator and Meal Planner For People with Spinal Cord Injury is made possible by a collaboration between the National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability and the Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation.

http://www.24acorns.org/

24 ACORNS (Adapting Community-based Obesity Reducing National Strategies)
This site is dedicated to providing a compilation of adaptations to 24 community-based obesity reduction strategies for youth and young adults with cognitive disabilities (autism and intellectual disabilities) and physical disabilities (spina bifida and cerebral palsy).

http://www.spinalcord.uab.edu/

Spinal Cord Injury Information Network (SCIIN)

http://www.uab.edu/medicine/sci/daily-living/nutrition

SCIIN: Nutrition
This page lists pamphlets, articles and presentations related to nutrition and people with spinal cord injuries.

http://www.uab.edu/medicine/sci/uab-scims-information/eatrightr-weight-management-program

SCIIN: EatRight Weight Management Program
This 12-week weight management program was designed for individuals with spinal cord impairments, which includes persons with spinal cord injury, dysfunction and disease. The program includes a workbook and video which participants can follow each week.

http://sci.washington.edu/
Northwest Regional Spinal Cord Injury System (NRSCIS)

NRSCIS: Everyday Nutrition for Individuals with Spinal Cord Injury
This report by Harborview Medical Center dietitian Vickeri Barton and occupational therapy clinical specialist Susie Kim was given on April 12, 2011. The presentation can be read online or viewed as a streaming video.

Websites from chefs with paralysis:

http://erinscookin.com/
Erin’s Cookin’
This site by Erin Poyle, a quadriplegic cook, has recipes and information on her book Erin’s Cookin’ With One Hand Behind My Back (10% of the book’s proceeds goes to the Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation).

Wheelchair Scale

http://lilypadscales.com/index.php
Lillypad Scales
1560 Trapelo Rd.
Waltham, MA 02451
Phone: 844-545-9723
Email: info@lilypadscales.com
A scale for manual wheelchair users to weigh themselves with at home. See the FAQ section for info on medical insurance coverage.

Streaming Videos

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nF2CVMjl8Rs&list=UU97Dz-3Cj74N7lqTquQtuPQ&index=1&feature=plcp (7 minutes)
University of Kansas: Diet Project for People with Physical Disabilities
The following books and videos are available for free loan from the PRC library. For more information, please visit the online catalog at: http://www1.youseemore.com/ReevePRC/default.asp

Books


• Riesz, Elizabeth D. Let’s Cook!: Healthy Meals for Independent Living. Mankdato, MN: Appletree Press, 2010. A pictorial cookbook to assist people with developmental disabilities to learn basic concepts of nutrition, food safety, and cooking skills.


Videos


The information contained in this message is presented for the purpose of educating and informing you about paralysis and its effects. Nothing contained in this message should be construed nor is intended to be used for medical diagnosis or treatment. It should not be used in place of the advice of your physician or other qualified health care provider. Should you have any health care related questions, please call or see your physician or other qualified health care provider promptly. Always consult with your physician or other qualified health care provider before embarking on a new treatment, diet or fitness program. You should never disregard medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read in this message.

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