

Overweight and Obesity

Maintaining a healthy body weight is important for good health, but every person's energy needs are different, depending on their activity levels. Ultimately, the "energy in" from food each day must be balanced with the "energy out" expended through exercise and activity.

For people with physical disabilities, energy needs are often related to ability. For example, people who use a wheelchair tend to have less energy needs than those who walk. People with spasticity type cerebral palsy tend to have less energy needs than those with athetosis.

Dietitian reviews are recommended for any person at risk of being either over – or underweight. Reviews will assist you to determine the most suitable foods to meet your needs.

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The percentage of Australians considered to be either overweight or obese is increasing, and it is a problem common in people with disabilities. Carrying too much weight can make movement difficult and goals like walking and transferring become difficult to continue, reducing independence.

Factors that are linked to increased levels of overweight and obesity include:

- Eating more food than the body needs
- Modern lifestyles – for example driving instead of walking and excess time seated in front of computers, televisions and other devices
- Increased availability of food – particularly those that have little nutritional value

Being obese increases the risk of conditions including type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, high blood pressure (which can cause stroke), osteoarthritis, sleep apnoea and pressure injuries.

Many people who are overweight often do not eat huge volumes of food, but the foods being eaten are not of high nutritional value. Regular monitoring of weight is recommended.

There are many resources available for information on healthy eating and weight management.

- **LiveLighter** – advice and resources relating to making healthier lifestyle choices
– livelighter.com.au
- **Eat for Health** – the Australian Government's resource for advice on healthy nutrition
– eatforhealth.gov.au
- **Dietitians Association of Australia** – healthy eating tips and advice about diet
– daa.asn.au/smart-eating-for-you

Health Professional Support

Dietitian reviews are recommended for individualised diet advice, to maintain a healthy body weight and prevent obesity.

Visit futurethinking.abilitycentre.com.au for more information.