

Menopausal health:

Obesity and overweight

Obesity is a chronic, complex, relapsing disease defined by excessive adiposity that can impair health. Obesity may be clinical or preclinical. Overweight is a condition characterized by excessive adiposity.

Globally, 43% of people aged 18 years and over are overweight and 16% live with obesity.

Definitions and terms

- **Obesity** is defined as a **body mass index (BMI)** $\geq 30 \text{ kg/m}^2$
 - **Clinical obesity** alters organ and tissue function
 - **Preclinical obesity** does not affect organ or tissue function
- **Overweight** is defined as a BMI $\geq 25 \text{ kg/m}^2$

Causes and risk factors

- Excessive food consumption
- Excessive alcohol consumption
- Physical inactivity
- Social and psychological factors
- Genetic predisposition
- Medical conditions such as polycystic ovary syndrome or hypothyroidism
- Medicines (e.g. steroids)

Menopause is associated with the development of abdominal obesity.

Effects on health

Health risks include:

- Cardiovascular diseases (mainly heart disease and stroke)
- Type 2 diabetes
- Musculoskeletal disorders (especially osteoarthritis), which in turn can lead to a greater risk of falls
- Neurological disorders
- Chronic respiratory diseases
- Digestive disorders
- Some cancers (including endometrial, breast and ovarian)

Management and prevention

- Promotion of healthy diet and lifestyles
- Provision of support
- Behavioral therapies
- Monitoring and treating comorbidities
- Medicines (e.g. GLP-1 therapies, such as semaglutide/Ozempic, tirzepatide/Mounjaro)
- Bariatric surgery (e.g. gastric banding, sleeve gastrectomy)

Further information

Celletti et al. (2025). WHO guideline on the use and indications of glucagon-like peptide-1 therapies for the treatment of obesity in adults <https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2025.24288>

NICE (2026). Guideline NG246. Overweight and obesity management <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng246>

WHO (2025). Overweight and obesity <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/obesity-and-overweight>