

# Why Is Gaining Weight So Easy?

Information on obesity



Region Örebro län

## Body weight & health

**Being overweight doesn't necessarily mean that a person will suffer from health problems or limitations in life. Still, for many, the condition does cause serious health issues, illnesses and a reduced quality of life.**

Obesity is defined as a condition where the fatty tissue in a person's body has a negative impact on their health. Just how their health is affected depends on where in the body this fatty tissue is located, how much of it there is and its function. Some common health problems experienced by obese people are high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, joint pain and sleep apnea.

Obesity is a chronic illness that must be managed throughout a person's life. Lifestyle changes can often improve the health of obese people, and the healthcare system can help by providing support. In some cases, healthcare workers might also prescribe surgery or medication in addition to support services to help a person succeed in changing their habits.

## Causes

In simple terms, obesity is caused by a person taking in more energy (calories) than their body uses over a long period of time. While there are very many reasons why this might happen, a combination of genetic and environmental factors is always involved. Modern life has changed a lot, especially over the past 50 years. On the other hand, our genes have not changed for several thousand years and they are not well suited to the kind of lifestyle we lead today.

Nowadays, we have access to plenty of tasty, energy-rich food and drink whenever we want it. We are also less and less physically active. Many other factors in a person's life can also play a role in obesity, such as patterns of waking and sleeping, sleeping habits, poor mental health and taking certain medications.

## Ignorance, prejudice & negative attitudes

Many people have a poor understanding of obesity, and this general ignorance has contributed to both prejudice against and negative views of people who suffer from this illness. Obese people are often criticised by those around them. A lack of both sympathy and knowledge among others with whom obese people come into contact makes changing their situation even more difficult for them. Such poor treatment often causes obese people to feel shame and guilt, and the psychological

consequences of this disease can be at least as serious for sufferers as its medical consequences.

## Health assessment

It is important to detect illnesses connected with obesity early on. You should begin by contacting your local healthcare centre (*vårdcentral*). The centre's staff will carry out a basic health assessment (*basutredning*), which will include interviewing you about your health and weight. Blood tests, blood pressure readings and weighing are also included in this assessment.

## Treatment

The healthcare system aims to help each individual enjoy a stable – if not improved – health status and a good quality of life. For obese patients, this does not necessarily involve weight loss as a first priority. Instead, trying to influence and manage the causes of weight gain and maintaining a stable weight are the first steps.

Any treatment recommended by healthcare staff is always based on changing a person's everyday habits. Often, the most important changes to make concerning eating habits are to eat regular meals, control portion size, increase the amount of vegetables in a person's diet and reduce the energy content of their food and drink. In addition, increasing physical activity is crucial to feeling good and maintaining a lower body weight. One first step on the road to this goal might be to reduce the amount of time one spends sitting still.

Most people need regular support, advice and “homework assignments” that are followed up on to succeed in making long-term changes. Regular weighing is also part of the weight-loss support programme. No matter which course of treatment is prescribed, the most difficult task is maintaining a stable, lower body weight over a number of years.

### Help available to you:

- [Group therapy or individual support](#)
- [Medication](#)
- [Surgery](#)

Group therapy and individual support services are offered at certain local healthcare centres (*vårdcentraler*). Örebro University Hospital's Obesity Unit (Överviktsenheten) also offers group therapy during certain periods,

often as part of research projects. This course of treatment usually lasts for 6–18 months and is based on cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). In some cases, meal-replacement therapy based on a low-energy diet (LED) might be used when treatment first begins to help a person lose weight quickly. Medication can also be used as a complement to group or individual therapy.

Surgery gives a person the best chance of maintaining a lower weight even several years after their operation. The recommended operation for treating obesity influences a person's hormones and suppresses their body's biological inclination to regain weight.



**A reduction of 5–10 per cent in a person's body weight normally results in:**

- Greater well-being & better quality of life
- More opportunities to lead an active everyday life
- Improvements in health conditions linked to excess weight
- A reduced risk of future illness

**Learn more online at:**  
[www.1177.se](http://www.1177.se) and [www.hobs.se](http://www.hobs.se)  
(in Swedish)



Region Örebro län