

Overweight

Overweight is a major life-threatening characteristic of older Australians.

According to the Heart Foundation:

- Older Australians (over 55) are much heavier (6 to 7 kg) than a generation ago
- Our personal idea of what is “acceptable” weight for us is typically much higher than medical science accepts. Men are much worse at this than women
- What we eat and how much is only part of the solution - what we burn up and how is at least as important.

Managing our weight has major implications for our longevity and our quality of life.

Why does weight matter?

Body fat is the issue. We come in all shapes and sizes. Excess body fat increases your risk from:

- coronary heart disease
- diabetes
- high blood pressure
- high blood cholesterol and other fats
- gall bladder disease
- joint problems such as gout, arthritis and joint pain
- sleep problems such as sleep apnoea certain cancers.

There are several accepted measures of overweight. Most widely used is the Body Mass Index (BMI) which divides your weight in kilos by the square of your height in metres.

As a guide, a female of height 1.68m (5'6") weighing more than 70kg would be

overweight, as would a male of height 1.78m (5'10") weighing more than 79kg. Both these results equate to a BMI of 25. A BMI of over 30 is classed as obese.

It's not just the amount, it's where it is

Fat around the waist is more related to developing chronic diseases than round hips and thighs. An “apple shape” is more of a health risk than a “pear shape”.

So, waist circumference is a good measure. The Heart Foundation suggests that increased risk is indicated with waist measurements of 94cm (37") or more in men and of 80cm (31") or more in women. Substantially increased risk is indicated at waist measurements exceeding 102cm (40") in males and 88cm (35") in women.

Take Control

The Heart Foundation offers these five top tips for sticking with healthy living targets:

- Small changes to your eating habits can make a big difference.
- Build physical activity into your day
- Changes should be long term, so it's important to enjoy your life and feel good about yourself.
- Reward yourself when you succeed in a change.
- Don't be put off by 'bad' days

For more detailed information click [here](#).