

# HEALTH MATTERS

## Spring

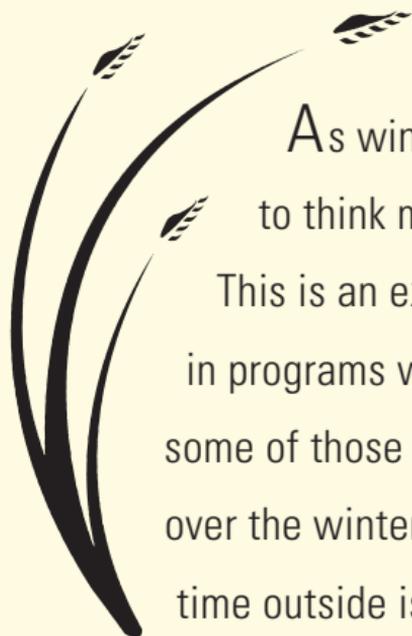
Healthy Weight and Allergies



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As winter turns to spring, we begin to think more about outside activities. This is an excellent time to get involved in programs which will help you shed some of those pounds you have picked up over the winter. However, spending more time outside is not always a good idea for everybody. Spring is when people with allergies usually suffer the most.



## To lose weight, what is recommended with regard to diet and exercise?

Weight loss occurs when a person establishes a "negative energy balance" by burning more calories through exercise than are consumed in the diet.

## When is a person considered overweight or obese?

An adult who has a BMI (Body Mass Index) of 30 or greater is considered to be obese. BMI is calculated by using the following formula:

$$[\text{weight in pounds} \div (\text{height in inches}^2)] \times 703 = \text{BMI}$$

- BMI of 18.5 to 24.9 is considered normal
- BMI of 25.0 to 29.9 is considered overweight
- BMI of 30 and above is considered obese

## What are some of the risk factors for obesity and being overweight?

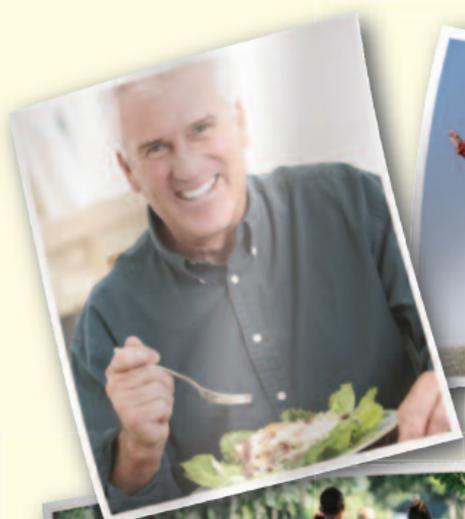
Risk factors for obesity include:

- lack of physical activity
- poor diet
- age – the incidence of obesity doubles between ages 20 and 55
- genetics – having a mother and/or father who are/is obese
- female gender – women are more likely to become obese than men

## How does one combat obesity?

One can combat obesity by:

- reducing the intake of foods high in saturated fats
- reducing the intake of concentrated sugar
- increasing the intake of fruits and vegetables
- increasing physical activity

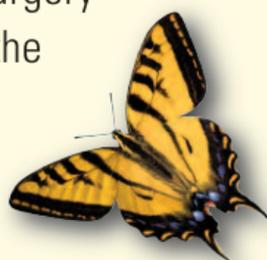


## Are diet and exercise the only options?

A balanced diet and exercise program should be the first step for those who are considered obese. It is always a good idea to first consult with a physician if you have any concerns about beginning a workout regimen.



Extremely obese patients may be candidates for bariatric surgery to reduce the size of the stomach.



## Spring is when people with allergies usually suffer the most.

### How do you distinguish allergies from a cold?

The symptoms of a cold and allergies are similar. However, colds and allergies differ in three respects. A fever is common with a cold, but not for those suffering with allergies. Allergy sufferers frequently have itchy eyes, nose, throat, and even the roof of the mouth, but itchiness is not common with colds. Another distinguishing characteristic between colds and allergies is the duration of the symptoms. Colds usually last for 3-7 days, while allergy symptoms may last for an entire season.

## **In general, what are people most allergic to?**

Springtime allergies are most often due to tree pollen and in more humid climates, outdoor mold. Grass pollen is a big cause of summer allergies, and weed pollen causes fall allergies.

## **What is the best treatment for allergies?**

Initially, over-the-counter antihistamines can be tried for relief of allergy symptoms. Your health-care provider should be consulted if you fail to respond to the use of over-the-counter antihistamines.

## **What other steps can be taken to reduce allergy symptoms?**

- Stay indoors on dry, windy days. The best time to go outside is after a rain, which helps clear pollen from the air.
- Delegate lawn mowing, weed pulling, and other gardening chores that stir up allergens.
- After spending time outside, take a shower to rinse pollen from your skin and hair and put on clean clothes.
- Wear a face mask if you do outside chores.
- Start taking over-the-counter antihistamines when high pollen counts are forecasted even before your symptoms start.
- Use air conditioning in your house and car.
- Use high-efficiency air filters and change them frequently.
- Keep indoor air dry with a dehumidifier.
- Clean floors frequently with a vacuum cleaner.

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