

What is morbid obesity?

More than two-thirds of Americans are overweight or obese; one-third are obese. But the obesity crisis in the United States is really the crisis of morbid obesity. It is this group - persons with morbid obesity - who have the most comorbid conditions, the highest health care costs and the greatest likelihood of death.

Morbid obesity is defined as a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 40 or more (roughly 100 pounds over ideal weight). (The Body Mass Index is a formula in which the weight in kilograms is divided by height in meters squared. A BMI of 30 to 39.9 is regarded as obese; 25-29.9 overweight and 20-24.9 normal weight; a BMI below 20 is considered unhealthy.) The number of Americans with morbid or severe obesity, defined as 100 pounds or more overweight or a BMI of 40, is growing twice as fast as the number of Americans who are overweight or obese.

The prevalence of Americans with a BMI over 50 has increased by 75 percent from 2000 to 2005. This statistic confirms that the heaviest BMI groups have been increasing at the fastest rates for 20 years. ([Increases in morbid obesity in the USA: 2000-2005. \[Public Health. 2007\] - PubMed Result](#))

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- The prevalence of morbid obesity is now 1 in 20 Americans. The prevalence is greater among women than men and among African-Americans than among non-Hispanic whites or Hispanics. The mortality due to morbid or extreme obesity is greater among the young than the older adults, greater for men than for women and greater among whites than blacks. Extreme obesity: a new medical crisis in the United States...[\[Mayo Clin Proc. 2006\] - PubMed Result](#).
- Unfortunately, it appears this trend will only grow worse. In a recently published paper, researchers noted the tendency for the heavier to become more heavy, especially among the young and minority groups. [Gender-ethnic disparity in BMI and waist circumfer...\[Obesity \(Silver Spring\). 2009\] - PubMed Result](#)
- While this population is only about 5 percent of the total U.S. population or 15 million people, it is greater than the entire population of Illinois and is roughly 3 times as large as the population with Alzheimer's disease.

Higher BMI is associated with shorter lifespan.

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- A recent study found of thousands of employees found that those with morbid obesity have a significantly higher prevalence of more than 102 diseases and conditions out of 131 eligible diseases and conditions than other employees and had a lower prevalence in only 3 categories: normal delivery, placenta previa and liveborn. The impact of morbid obesity and bariatric surgery... [J Occup Environ Med. 2009] - PubMed Result This study also revealed several conditions which were not noted in previous studies including intervertebral disc disorders, malaise and fatigue, anemia, other upper respiratory disease, abdominal pain, nonspecific chest pain.
- Higher BMI is associated with lower than expected life duration. Excess BMI is responsible for an estimated 95 million years-of-life-lost; white females account for more than 2/3 of the years-of-life-lost. Individual and Aggregate Years-of-life-lost Associ...[Obesity (Silver Spring). 2009] - PubMed Result