What is Obesity?

Overweight and obesity are both labels for ranges of weight that are greater than what is generally considered healthy for a given height. The terms also identify ranges of weight that increase the likelihood of certain diseases and other health problems.

For adults, overweight and obesity ranges are determined by using weight and height to calculate a number called the "body mass index" (BMI). For most people, it correlates with their amount of body fat. For an adult, a BMI of 25.0-29.9 is considered overweight, and 30.0 or higher is considered obese. To calculate BMI, divide weight in pounds by height in inches squared, and multiply by 703. Doctors also take into account a person's age, gender, and muscularity when they interpret BMI.

For children and teens, BMI ranges above a normal weight have different labels (at risk of overweight and overweight). Additionally, BMI ranges for children and teens are defined so that they take into account normal differences in body fat between boys and girls and differences in body fat at various ages.

Who is affected by Obesity?

The prevalence of obesity is increasing at an alarming rate across the country and around the world, regardless of age, sex, race or ethnicity.

- Over 2/3 of adult males in Connecticut are either overweight (42.0) or obese (25.4%), and over 1/2 of adult females in CT are either overweight (28.4%) or obese (23.6%).
- Over one-quarter (26.6%) of Connecticut high school students are either overweight (14.1%) or obese (12.5%). And male students are significantly more likely to be overweight or obese than female students.

Obesity and its associated chronic health problems disproportionately affect African American, Hispanic and Native American populations. In Connecticut:

- Two out of three Hispanic adults are overweight (32.2%) or obese (32.6%);
- Three out of four African American adults are overweight (39.2%) or obese (32.8%); and,
- Obesity rates are higher among African American teens (31.2%; 16.0% overweight, 15.2% obese) and non-Hispanic black teens (43.9%; 19.9% overweight, 24.0% obese), compared to white teens (22.1%; 12.3% overweight, 9.8% obese).

Data Sources: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System; CT School Health Survey

Why is it important to know if you have a family history of Obesity?

Diet, physical inactivity, genetic factors, environment, and health conditions all contribute to high overweight and obesity rates.

Health care providers can use family health history to help identify people at high risk of obesity-related disorders such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and some forms of cancer. Weight loss or prevention of excessive weight gains are especially important in this high-risk group.

Your Family Health History
Know your past. Act in the present. Protect your future.

Why is it important to know about Obesity?

Obesity kills more Americans each year than AIDS, cancer and injuries combined. Obesity is a major risk factor for many chronic diseases, including four of the ten leading causes of death in the United States: heart disease, stroke, diabetes and several forms of cancer. Obesity is also associated with high blood pressure and high cholesterol, both of which contribute to heart disease. In fact, obesity is now widely considered to be second-only to smoking as the leading cause of preventable death in the United States.

All people should follow a healthful diet and incorporate regular physical activity into their daily routine to help reduce the risk of obesity and its associated conditions.

Obesity Resources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/index.html

United States Department of Agriculture
www.choosemyplate.gov

National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute
www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/obe

American Heart Association
www.heart.org/HEARTORG

DPH - Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Prevention Program
www.ct.gov/dph/cwp/view.asp?a=3137&q=393114
or call (860) 509-8251