

WEIGHT GAIN



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An increase in food and/or a lack of exercise leads to an increase in weight. Weight gain varies from person to person as each individual has different metabolic rate. A slight amount of weight gain is normal as long as your body mass index (BMI) is within the range. Your body mass index is based on your weight and height. If your body mass index is more than 25 but less than 30, you are considered overweight and if your body mass index is 30 or higher, then you are considered obese. Within the obese category, there are three subcategories: a class 1 is a BMI of 30 and less than 35; a class 2 is a BMI of 35 and less than 40; and a class 3 is a BMI of 40 and higher.

There are varieties of food that increase our weight and some examples include: milk, rice, egg, cheese, yogurt, pasta, red meat, nuts, whole-grain breads, salmon, protein supplements, avocados, dried fruits, cereal bars and whole-grain cereals. Other ways of causing weight gain in addition to food are: lack of sleep; stress; drugs such as steroids, antidepressants and drugs used for treating bipolar or schizophrenic disorders; and also some underlying medical conditions.

When you gain weight, there are two situations that should not be ignored: the first one is when you may be gaining too much weight and trying to lose it but all your efforts go in vain or secondly, you may experience a sudden weight gain. In such situations, certain health conditions must be considered - it could be related to your endocrine system or a mood disorder or some other factor. An underactive thyroid (hypothyroidism) leads to an increase in weight. If you experience other symptoms of hypothyroidism such as tiredness, dry skin, thin hair, cold intolerance, constipation, decrease in appetite and along with a certain increase in weight, then hypothyroidism is probably the reason of your weight gain. A condition in women known as polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS) can result in an increase in weight. PCOS is due to a hormonal imbalance. If a woman experiences other manifestations such as acne, hirsutism, irregular menses, acanthosis nigricans (dark pigmentation of the skin) and as well weight gain, then her chances of having PCOS is high. A health condition known as Cushing syndrome occurs as a result of excessive hormone cortisol. A person experiencing weight gain and other symptoms such as acne, purple stretch marks, hirsutism, moon face, thin skin and a buffalo hump may be having Cushing syndrome. A common medical condition, type 2 diabetes which is due to insulin resistance can result in weight gain but it also causes other symptoms such as polydipsia (excessive thirst), polyuria (excessive urination), polyphagia (excessive eating), blurry vision, tiredness and dry mouth. Ovarian and uterine tumors can also manifest weight gain with other symptoms such as abnormal bleeding, abdominal bloating, constipation, low back pain, pelvic pain and dyspareunia. Women going through perimenopause or menopause may put on some weight. A change in hormones is one of the reasons for weight gain during menopause. A person going through depression or anxiety and constantly indulging in food will cause them to increase their weight. If you see yourself constantly eating and having other symptoms of depression such as low depressed mood, feeling worthless, loss of energy, trouble sleeping, difficulty in concentration, suicidal thoughts, changes in appetite and anhedonia then seeking a psychiatrist's help is recommended. Therefore, if you experience any other signs and symptoms besides weight gain, you need to be further evaluated in order to rule out

hypothyroidism, PCOS, Cushing syndrome, type 2 diabetes, ovarian or uterine tumor, perimenopause or menopause and mood disorders such as depression and anxiety.

A slight gain in weight is normal as long as your BMI is within the range. If your BMI shows you are overweight or obese, exercise and controlling your food intake is important. If by dieting and exercising, your weight is not being controlled or you experience a sudden weight gain, then other causative factors need to be further evaluated.

References:

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2. Lauriello, S. (2018). *8 Conditions That Could Explain Your Sudden Weight Gain*. [online] Health. Available at: <https://www.health.com/mind-body/sudden-weight-gain-causes> [Accessed 23 Feb. 2019].