

Doesn't Everyone Worry?

We think about health everyday. Sometimes we worry about health and health care. What are Americans most common worries and concerns?

When adults and teens are asked about health worries and concerns, their answers follow the order listed in the two gray boxes below right and on the following page. (We have listed the responses in order from highest to lowest.) Males answer in the same order as females.



An Apple a Day

Regardless of income or gender, about half of Americans aged 14-69 rate eating, weight, and exercise as their #1 concern.

Based on the information from the preceding chapter “What Are My Chances,” 17% of premature deaths can be eliminated by better management of eating, weight and exercise.

In 1991 about 15% of American adults were very overweight; today almost 30% are seriously overweight. Largeness has become such a problem here and abroad that airlines may have to be redesigned so that we can fit.

Being overweight has a high health and social cost. Nonetheless, eating is enjoyable and dieting is not. Eating well and maintaining ideal body weight is difficult in both rich and poor countries because of the high consumption of carbohydrates (sugars) and low levels of exercise. Overall, Americans eat many more calories a day

Adults Aged 19-69: Do You Have Any Concerns About?

- Exercise and nutrition needs
- Preventing disease and premature death
- How to make the health system work better for you
- Preventing injuries or accidents
- Substance abuse (alcohol/drugs)
- Sexual issues or birth control
- Violence or abuse
- AIDS or sexual diseases





**Pre-Teens and Teens:
Aged 9-18: Do You
Have Any Concerns
About?**

- Exercise and eating
- Violence and abuse
- Depression or suicide
- Substance abuse
- Sexual issues
- AIDs or sexual diseases

**A Century of Weight-
loss Facts and Fads**

- 1898 Fletcher Chewing
- 1918 Count Calories
- 1935 Grapefruit Diet
- 1936 Radio Reducing Parties
- 1948 Amphetamines
- 1958 Saccharin
- 1961 Weight Watchers Begins
- 1963 Sugar-Free Tab Soda
- 1972 High Protein and Fat Diet
- 1980 Anorexia Nervosa Named
- 1981 Beverly Hills Diet
- 1982 LipoSuction Begins
- 1988 Optifast Liquid Diet
- 1990 Fen-phen Diet
- 1997 Fen-phen Withdrawn
- 2004 Ephedra Withdrawn; Atkins battles South Beach

than they did in the 1970... enough calories to gain many pounds of fat each year.

When adults combine a slightly reduced calorie diet with 3 times per week exercise, they can expect to lose around 5-10% of their weight over 6 months. Currently, only 1/4 of Americans exercise 3 or more days a week hard enough to breathe heavily and sweat. Although a third of adult Americans say they are trying to lose weight, only about 1/5 are actually restricting calories and increasing their exercise.

Americans continue to get most of their information about food and diet from TV (70%) and magazines (60%). In these media, “fads” spread quickly and recycle to different audiences.

“In” diets now include olive oil, small size, and even eggs. “Out” now are stick margarine and other solid fats, bagels, “super-size”, red meat, and sweets. This table is an overview of the century’s weight-loss facts and fads.

It is said that “Diets are mainly food for thought!” Instead of restricting calories and staying active many Americans try special diets, herbs, and “tricks” to lose weight (including cigarettes!). No medicines, herbs, or “tricks” have been shown to have a large or lasting effect.

Being overweight increases the tendency toward high blood pressure and high levels of bad fats in the blood (most often measured as cholesterol). For many people the first treatment for high blood pressure and high cholesterol is to lose weight and to change their diet.

Being very overweight has a large impact on overall health. For example, very overweight teens and adults have about 50% more sick days requiring bed-rest or restricted activity compared to those who are not severely overweight. About 35% of very overweight adults take 3 or more medicines each day versus 15% of the non-obese. Obesity has many similar adverse impacts on pre-teens and teens. The tables shown at right list other effects of obesity.

Adverse Impacts of Obesity on Adults 19-69

Problem	If Overweight	If Not Overweight
High Blood Pressure	40%	15%
Arthritis	25%	10%
(Sugar) Diabetes	10%	5%
Limits from Pain	25%	15%
Limits from Feelings	20%	15%
Limits in Daily Activities	10%	5%
Not Good Problem Management	75%	60%

Adverse Impacts of Obesity on Pre-teens and Teens

Problem	If Overweight	If Not Overweight
Limits from Pain	35%	15%
Limits from Feelings	30%	20%
Limits in Daily Activities	20%	10%
Poor Problem Solving	25%	10%

The good news is that even if weight loss is difficult for most Americans, regular exercise alone will help maintain health, burn a few calories, and prolong life. The bad news is that exercise alone is seldom an effective way to lose weight; we must eat less.

Preventing Disease and Premature Death

The next most frequent concern of adults is the prevention of disease...particularly, heart disease and cancer. Not surprisingly, the concern about these common causes of death increases with age, from about 25% in the healthy young to about 40% in older adults.



An Apple a Day?

If you eat an apple a day more than your body needs, you will be loading about 70 extra calories a day.

Over 365 days, these 70 calories become about 6 pounds. In 10 years, you will be 60 pounds heavier.

What's that about keeping the doctor away?