

## **Am I Overweight?**

Katie Bogue, R.D.

San Diego Regional 5 a Day Program

A recent study published by the New England Journal of Medicine showed that carrying extra weight is linked with over 90,000 cancer deaths in the United States, and may attribute for 20% of all cancer deaths in women and 14% in men. It also showed that losing weight can reduce the risk of cancer.

So, are you at an increased risk of cancer based on your current weight? It's always confusing how overweight and obese are measured. They are both based on Body Mass Index, a ratio of weight based on height. To calculate your BMI, follow these steps:

1. Multiply weight in pounds by 703.
2. Multiply height in inches by height in inches.
3. Divide the answer in Step 1 by the answer in Step 2 to get BMI.

The normal range for BMI is 18.5-24.9. A BMI of 25-29.9 is considered overweight; and a BMI of 30 or more is defined as obese. If you are a muscular athlete, your BMI may be above the normal range because muscle weighs more than fat.

In San Diego, almost half of adults (47%) are overweight or obese. If you fall above the normal range, it's O.K.! Numbers on a scale cannot tell you how to feel about yourself. The goal is to be healthy and to be able to enjoy the things you like to do, without weight hindering you.

Here are some tips for leading a healthy, active life:

- Eat five servings of fruits and vegetables everyday. It sounds like a lot, but it's as simple as a banana at breakfast, baby carrots for lunch, and a big spinach salad with dinner. A serving is 1 medium-sized fruit, ½ cup cooked or raw vegetables, and 1 cup of salad.
- Be active for at least 30 minutes (for adults) and 60 minutes (for kids) everyday. This does not mean you have to go to the gym or run daily! Activities like walking to do errands, cleaning your place, and playing with kids all count.
- Choose a variety of foods. We often get in the habit of eating the same foods, over and over. Try a new fruit or vegetable, like star fruit or yams. Experiment with a new rice or pasta, like couscous or gnocchi.
- Build physical activity into your everyday. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Get up and stretch while working on your computer. Go on a bike ride after dinner. Walk during your lunch break.

For more information, log onto [www.sd5aday.org](http://www.sd5aday.org).