What is a family health history?
A family health history is a portrait of the shared lives and health of your extended family.

Screening recommendations

... for individuals WITH A FAMILY HISTORY of obesity

Family history is a risk factor for obesity but there are no specific screening guidelines for individuals with a family history of obesity.

... for individuals WITH NO KNOWN FAMILY HISTORY of obesity

The United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPTF) recommends that health care providers screen all adult patients for obesity (using BMI and waist circumference) and offer intensive counseling and behavioral interventions to promote sustained weight loss for obese adults.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute’s (NHLBI) Obesity Education Initiative recommends that overweight and obese patients be screened by a health care provider. Screening should include BMI and waist circumference measurements and an assessment of related diseases such as diabetes and heart disease.

The Mayo Clinic recommends that overweight or obese (a BMI of 25-29 and 30, respectively) persons consult with a health care provider, especially if the weight is around the waist or upper body. A clinical diagnosis should include an evaluation of a person’s BMI and waist circumference, a medical history that includes questions about fat intake, smoking, drinking alcohol, and stress levels, and an assessment of a person’s current health.
Obesity risk factors and what you can do about them

Things you can change

- **Diet**: A diet high in fat and calories and low in whole grains, fruits, and vegetables increases risk
- **Exercise**: An inactive lifestyle increases risk
- **Alcohol**: Drinking alcohol adds calories to the diet and increases the risk of obesity
- **Stress and Depression**: Increases risk
- **Smoking**: Smokers tend to gain weight after quitting (the average weight gain is 10 pounds)
- **Pregnancy**: Some women find pregnancy weight difficult to lose after the baby is born. This weight gain may contribute to the development of obesity in women.

Things you can't change

- **Family history**: If your parents or other close blood relatives are obese, you’re more likely to be obese
- **Age**: Risk increases with age
- **Medications**: Corticosteroids and tricyclic antidepressants, in particular, can lead to weight gain
- **Socioeconomic status**: A lower socioeconomic status increases risk

What can you do if you have a family history of obesity?

- Eat a balanced diet including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat or fat-free dairy products, and lean meats
- Be active
- Drink alcohol sensibly
- Watch your weight when you quit smoking
- Manage your stress and depression
- Get regular check-ups
- Talk to your health care provider about your family health history of obesity
- See your health care provider for regular risk assessment and counseling about behavioral change
- Get screened regularly for obesity

Sources

- National Cancer Institute, www.cancer.gov