



# *What is* **Obesity?**

Obesity is a medical condition in which excess body fat has accumulated to the extent that it may have an adverse effect on health, leading to increased health problems and reduced life expectancy.

- > More than one-third of US adults (35.7%) are obese.
- > Obesity increases the likelihood of various diseases, particularly heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, obstructive sleep apnea, certain types of cancer, and osteoarthritis.
- > The most common cause of obesity is excessive food energy intake (sugars and carbohydrates), lack of physical activity, and genetic susceptibility (though few cases are caused primarily by genes).
- > Obesity is increasing in adults and children, and authorities view it as one of the most serious public health problems of the 21st century.
- > Medical costs associated with obesity were estimated at \$147 billion last year.
- > Obesity is a leading preventable cause of death worldwide.

## **How is obesity related to your mouth?**

Various studies have shown that individuals affected by obesity have more oral health problems than other individuals in general. Published findings indicate that these special-needs patients have higher tooth decay levels, more missing teeth, and fewer essential dental fillings. Obese individuals between the ages of 18 and 34 were found to have a rate of periodontal disease 76 percent higher than individuals within a normal weight range.

While the connection between obesity and dental health is complex, part of the reason may be diet. The combination of bacteria and food causes tooth decay. Plaque, a clear sticky substance that contains bacteria, forms on your teeth and gums, and as the bacteria feed on the sugars in the food you eat, they make acids. The acids attack the teeth for 20 minutes or more after eating. Over a period of time, these acids destroy tooth enamel, resulting in tooth decay.

## **How is obesity related to your mouth?**

- > Eat a well-balanced diet
- > Drink plenty of water
- > Limit snacking
- > Avoid sugary drinks

## **Resources**

<http://www.webmd.com/oral-health>

<http://www.wikipedia.org/>

<http://www.obesityaction.org>

<http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/adult.html>

<http://www.goodhealthstartshere.org>