

Study: Half of U.S. Adults will be Obese in a Decade

As a nation, obesity has been a serious health care stumbling block. According to the [National Institutes of Health](#), an estimated 300,000 deaths per year are due to the obesity epidemic. Now, new research is painting a bleak picture for the future. Scientists are predicting that nearly half of American adults will be obese within a decade.

A new report published in [The New England Journal of Medicine](#) concluded that by 2030, 49% of U.S. adults will be considered obese. Of those people, about one-quarter is predicted to have severe obesity. Currently, the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) estimates that 40% of U.S. adults are obese.

“It is not surprising. We have constantly been hearing the obesity epidemic is rising. It’s on the rise. And even though we are recognizing that and starting to put things into initiatives, until those things can be seen and activated, it’s going to continue to rise,” said Kaela Ketchum, registered dietitian, OSF HealthCare.

Obesity is not just a “weight problem.” It is a long-term disease that can cause serious health problems. Obesity can raise the risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancer and other health problems.

However, Ketchum says there is no one-size-fits-all reason people become obese, so treating it is also a complicated issue.

“There are so many factors that play into obesity, and I think that’s sometimes where we go wrong is that we think, ‘If you just change this one thing you won’t be obese. Or if you just do this one thing you won’t become obese.’ And although that sounds easy and ideal, it’s not just one thing, and it’s not food, explained Ketchum. She continued, “There’s history, there’s backgrounds, there’s genetics, there’s mental psychology that plays a role, and I think that’s something we can’t forget when working with that population.”

To truly tackle this public health problem, Ketchum stresses that major changes are needed. This includes improving access to healthy foods and educating people about food availability and prices.

“If you’re buying produce out of season, yes it’s not going to taste as good, and it’s going to be a lot more expensive. But if you’re educated about when produce is in season, then it can be just as cheap as going out and getting a whole fast food meal, and you can have your produce and meat on the table for the same price with a lot less fat, sugar and other additives in it,” she said.

Ketchum encourages people to focus on replacing processed, sugary foods with healthier whole foods, fitting physical activity into their day, and getting good sleep.

Anyone seeking extra help in their weight loss journey can partner with the OSF HealthCare weight loss management experts: nutritionists, nurses, exercise specialists and even surgeons (if that is your best option). To learn more, visit osfhealthcare.org/weight-loss or call (309) 655-2000 to find out what services are available in your area.