

Why are people with obesity vulnerable to COVID-19?



Health experts have said that the elderly, people with chronic conditions such as diabetes and **people with obesity** are in the **groups of those vulnerable** to the **COVID-19** pandemic.

Verónica Flores, Director of the **Nutrition and Integrated Wellbeing** department in the Mexico City Region, explains why **people with obesity** are more at risk from **COVID-19**.

*“People with **obesity** can present more complications due to the disease, **especially if they have a body mass index of more than 40**.”*

*“As **obesity** is an inflammatory process, **it weakens the immunological system**, which makes it more difficult for the body **to combat infections**,”* said the expert.

However, when are people considered to **suffer from obesity**?

The **World Health Organization** defines overweight and obesity as excessive fat accumulation that presents a risk to health.

*“The **Body Mass Index (BMI)** is often used to classify people who are overweight or obese. This is defined as a person’s weight in kilograms divided by the square of his or her height in meters (kg/m²).*

*“Someone with a body mass index of more than 25 is considered **overweight** and a person is considered obese when it’s over 30,”* explains the professor.



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The expert also explains that many people who suffer from **obesity** also have another **pathology**.

*“A high percentage of people with obesity present some other pathology such as **hypertension or diabetes**, which can further complicate development and treatment of the condition. What’s more, many people **suffer from respiratory problems such as apnea**, which makes complications caused by COVID-19 more likely.*

*“A report prepared by the **Intensive Care National Audit and Research Centre in London** recorded that nearly 64% of COVID-19 patients in intensive care were overweight or had obesity,” she added.*

Verónica Flores provides some tips in addition to the recommendations made by the **Mexican government** such as staying at home and following proper hygiene measures.

*“People who suffer from obesity should **take precautions**, as their condition places them in a **high-risk group**, so we recommend that they work from home and **don’t go out unless it’s essential**,” she said.*

What’s the right way to reach my ideal weight?

Besides the **COVID-19** pandemic, **obesity** is a health **risk**. This Tec de Monterrey professor provides some recommendations on this.

*“Having a healthy weight has always been important for **preventing disease**. However, **the risk of COVID-19** with complications is now one more reason for focusing on this goal.*

*“**Advice from a nutritionist** can help people who want to reach their ideal weight. During quarantine, many nutrition professionals are offering online and telephone consultations to support those who want to begin changing their habits,” she concluded.*

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