

## **Poll: Few Americans know all the risks of obesity**

JENNIFER AGIESTA - Associated Press - Associated Press

Heart disease and diabetes get all the attention, but what about the many other ways obesity can damage your health?

Carrying too many pounds may lead to or worsen some types of cancer, arthritis, sleep apnea, even infertility. But a new poll suggests few Americans realize the links.

Only about one-quarter of people think it's possible for someone to be very overweight and still be healthy, according to the poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Ask about the most serious consequences, and more than 7 in 10 Americans can correctly tick off heart disease and diabetes. Heart disease is the nation's leading killer, and diabetes and obesity are twin epidemics.

The other consequences aren't so well known.

"People are often shocked to hear how far-reaching the effects of obesity are," said Jennifer Dimitriou, a dietitian at New York's Montefiore Medical Center.

Just 7 percent of people surveyed mentioned cancer, although doctors long have known that fat increases the risk of developing cancers of the colon, breast, prostate, uterus and certain other sites. Plus, being overweight can make it harder to spot tumors early and to treat them.

Then there's the toll on your joints, especially the knees. About 15 percent of people knew obesity can contribute to arthritis.

High blood pressure, high cholesterol and strokes were fairly low on the list. Infertility didn't get a mention.

Also, 5 percent put respiratory problems on the list. Studies show people who are overweight are at increased risk of sleep apnea and asthma, and that dropping pounds can help improve their symptoms.

Knowing more about the myriad ways obesity affects health could help motivate people to get more active and eat better before full-blown disease strikes, Dimitriou said.

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