

Like clockwork

from Dr. Laura Corio, M.D.

Women's Health Issues

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Weight Gain Milestones

Wedding bells, baby's first steps, retirement. Major life events all. Unfortunately, when life hits a high note, I've seen too many of my patients hit a bodyweight highpoint as well. Below, 4 of life's typical "weight gain milestones" and some advice on how to enjoy the moment without fattening up.

Matrimonial Mass

Wedded bliss has recently been tied to better health but also to thicker thighs and wider waists. Both men and women are likely to add about five pounds in the first few years of marriage, probably experts think, because you eat when your spouse eats whether or not you're hungry. Besides, you've already snagged a mate, so why not let it all hang out? One way to lose weight is to ditch your significant other – divorce typically leads to weight loss – but if you're not willing to take such a drastic step, start exercising and encourage your partner to do the same. Over time your weight will tend to drift in the same direction as your partner's so you have a better chance of shedding some pounds if your spouse does the same.

Baby Fat

In general women tend to be heavier after giving birth; they gain 4 pounds with each bundle of joy. (Interestingly, men add an extra 3 pounds per child -- and that's without the excuse of haywire hormones and eating for two!) If you gain more than the recommended 35 pounds during pregnancy, studies show that you're likely to hold on to almost 18 pounds, at least until the time your kids hit preschool. You may be able to ward off weight gain by breast feeding for at least six months. However, don't depend on breast feeding to do all of the work. Though it's has been touted as one the most effective weight loss aid for post partum women, studies indicate mixed results. One reason for this could be that the current advice to eat 500 additional calories per day when you are nursing is overstated and, while no one is suggesting you diet while breast feeding, many experts now recommend eating no more than 250 additional calories daily. Practicing portion control (even if you can't always make the best food choices) and doing several shorter workouts rather than one long one, are other strategies you can employ.

Season's Growings

Notice more XXX-L Santas this year? Many of them don't need padding to pull off the fat and jolly look. Like most of us, Santa gains at least a pound each holiday season a pound that's unlikely to be shed during the course of a year; so a decade's worth of eggnog and cheese logs results in a significant spare tire. In fact, the average person consumes 150 extra calories on most days during the holiday season and up to a whopping 4,500 calories on Thanksgiving and Christmas Day. It is possible to avoid festive fat, but don't expect a 20-minute walk to do it. Realistically, you're not going to skip a celebratory meal, so you've got to cut back elsewhere and find a way to burn off that excess butter.

Older and Larger

When women hit menopause, the pile up of pounds continues. The average weight gain for a menopausal woman is 12 pounds though the range is huge. Most of this gain is due to a slow-down in estrogen production – fat cells become the primary source of estrogen -- but some of it can be blamed on eating too much and moving too little. It's possible for women to ward off at least some late life fat with longer workouts, a more active lifestyle, frequent, small meals, and upping intake of "healthy" fats to help stimulate estrogen production.

Total It Up

These weight gain milestones represent times in your life when you are especially vulnerable to weight gain. Together they represent a total gain of 31 pounds over the course of a lifetime. Obviously, not everyone gains at each and every milestone, but considering that more than 65% of us are now considered overweight or obese, experts say these are the times to be especially vigilant with exercise and diet. Interestingly, both sexes begin to see a weight decline by the time they start collecting social security due to declining appetite and decreased muscle and bone mass. However, by then much of the damage from carrying around excess body fat is done.



Aim for a weekly weight loss no greater than 2 pounds

When you lose weight more quickly than that, you lose some muscle mass which can slow metabolism and cause other unhealthy side effects.



Dr. Corio's Recommendations

To lose weight, copy the habits of successful losers:

- 78% eat breakfast every day
- 75% weigh themselves at least once a week
- 62% watch less than 10 hours of TV per week
- 90% exercise, on average, about 1 hour per day

(Source: National Weight Control Registry)

PEARLS

The Question: How much weight should I gain during pregnancy?

The Research: Weight gain during pregnancy should be gradual with the most weight being gained in the last trimester. According to the American College of Gynecologists and Obstetricians (ACOG), you should gain about 2 to 4 pounds during the first three months of pregnancy and then 3 to 4 pounds per month for the rest of your pregnancy. Total weight gain should be about 25 to 30 pounds. The Institute of Medicine recommends that women who are underweight gain 28 to 40 pounds during pregnancy and women who are overweight gain no more than 15 to 25 pounds. While you should never diet during pregnancy, going overboard with the “eating for two” concept can set you up for post partum weight gain and some evidence suggests it may also predispose your child to obesity later in life.

Dr. Corio Says: Guidelines are one thing but every woman is unique. Let’s work together to determine the right amount of weight gain for you and your baby. Keep the dialog going; I encourage you to ask me questions.

The Question: What is BMI and what should mine be?

The Research: BMI, short for Body Mass Index, is a measure of body fat based on height and weight. It’s considered a reliable way to determine whether or not you are at a healthy weight, because it tells you something about how much of your weight is body fat and how much is lean body mass. It’s also considered a reliable indicator of health risks such as heart disease and cancer. A BMI of less than 18.5 is considered underweight; between 18.6-24.9 is considered healthy; and, over 25 is considered overweight. (Go to nhlbisupport.com/bmi for a BMI calculator to determine what your BMI).

Dr. Corio Says: BMI is not a perfect measure and doesn’t accurately portray everyone’s “fatness” or health risks, especially if you have an athletic build. But if you’re concerned about your weight, it’s a good place to start. Looked at in combination with other measures such as scale weight and body fat percentage, it can help you determine which way your weight is trending. And as long as you’ve got your tape measure out for BMI, I strongly recommend looking at your waist circumference as well. Emerging research from Ohio State University in Columbus shows that even a slightly elevated waist circumference can increase your risk of high blood pressure even if your weight and BMI are in the normal range. For women, your waist measurement should be less than 31.5 inches; for an accurate reading, measure the smallest part of your waist.

Sources: Ob. Gyn News, ACOG.org and nih.gov

Doctor & Office Hours

Doctor’s Hours

Monday	12:00 PM-6:00 PM
Tuesday	9:00 AM-3:00 PM
Wednesday	9:30 AM-2:30 PM
Thursday	8:00 AM-2:00 PM

Office Hours

Monday	10:00 AM-5:00 PM
Tuesday – Friday	9:00 AM-4:00 PM

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News Flash

It sounds almost too unbelievable to be true but researchers from Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and other esteemed medical organizations predict that most adults in the U.S. will be overweight or obese by the year 2030, with related health care spending projected to be as much as \$956.9 billion. Reporting in the online version of the Journal of Obesity, the researchers note that the prevalence of obesity has been leaping forward for the past three decades. If these trends continue, more than 86% of adults will be overweight or obese by 2030. This would result in 1 of every 6 health care dollars being spent on direct health care costs for issues relating to excess fat—that’s 15-17% of projected total health care costs. Children being born today would also be the first generation to have a shorter life expectancy than their parents. Scary stuff indeed.

This information has been adapted from sciencedaily.com and materials provided by Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health.