Obesity More Dangerous than Smoking

The National Cancer Institute did a study that compared obesity health problems to those of smoking. Published recently in ***PLOS Medicine***, it found the troubles caused by obesity like strokes, heart disease, cancer, diabetes and other illnesses can be worse than a heavy cigarette habit.

While both cut the lifespan, obesity — the study says — is worse. Nearly 30% of the world's population — or 2.1 billion people — are overweight. At this point a definition is in order. Here's a definition of obesity using someone 5 feet, 5 inches tall.

- Overweight is defined as being 150-pounds for someone that size. The body mass or BMI for the person weighing 150-pounds is 25.0 to 29.9.
- Obesity is 180-pounds for the same height. The BMI is 30 or higher.
- Extreme obesity is 241-pounds at that height. The BMI is 40 or higher.

Here are some statistics:

- Those extremely obese — 100 pounds overweight or more — die 6.5 to 13.7 years earlier than someone with a healthy weight.
- The person with a BMI of 40 to 44.9 loses an average of 6.5-years of life.
- The person with a BMI of 45 to 49.9 loses an average of 8.9-years of life.
- The person with a BMI of 50 to 54.9 loses an average of 9.8-years of life.
- The person with a BMI of 55 to 59.9 loses an average of 13.7-years of life.
- Those with healthy weight who smoke lose about 8.9-years of life.

As for U.S. statistics, we are above the worldwide average of 30% when it comes to obesity. The U.S. stands at 36%. The number of U.S. citizens with a BMI of 40 or higher has more than quadrupled since the middle 1980s.

One in six U.S. citizens is extremely obese.