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# PROACTIVE TIMES

Preventive Health Newsletter for Sierra Madre VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2, FALL 2006

## WHY YOUR WEIGHT CAN'T WAIT!



### PREVENTIVE MEDICINE

#### WHY IS MY PHYSICIAN SO CONCERNED WITH MY WEIGHT? WHY CAN'T IT WAIT?

As a physician, I find that each time I ask someone to step on the scale I learn more about them than just their weight. In our society, "How much do you weigh" can be one of the most intrusive things that one person (doctors included) can ask of another. Why is this? Why is weight so important? Why do physicians care about weight? Why can't weight wait?

A discussion about weight is sensitive because it can be taken in two very different ways. It can be seen as a critique on how you look, or as education about how to live healthier. Therefore it can be interpreted as negative or positive. To better understand two very different perspectives on the same subject, ask yourself two questions:

1. What weight should I be to be healthy and to reduce my chances of illness and death?
2. What weight do I want to be to look the way I want, or the way I believe others want me to look?

Separating these two questions provides a healthier perspective on the issue of weight and more clearly identifies two fundamentally different concerns. When the two concerns overlap we can become confused, hurt, and ultimately paralyzed from seeking appropriate help. Meanwhile, in the last 40 years, the percentage of Americans who are overweight and obese has increased from 44% to 61%.

Let's address each question. The answer to Question 1 is undeniably important. Weight, either less or greater than healthy, can lead to illness and death. Discussing weight with your physician in this way should be no more intrusive than discussing your blood pressure or your cholesterol. Dealing with Question 1 cannot wait. Each day that an individual is not at their ideal body weight can increase their chances of illness and death.

The answer to Question 2 is as important as each person would like it to be. If I were you, I would not look to most physicians, dermatologists and plastic surgeons aside, for answers to Question 2. As a primary care physician I have little training in this area, and I have a hard enough time keeping

myself together! Although addressing Question 2 is important to most of us, from my perspective, it can be put off as long as we would like.

Unfortunately, when we confuse the above two questions, weight is viewed from a perspective of vanity rather than health, and reaching our goal weight becomes an issue of convenience, rather than necessity.

What weight should I be to be healthy and reduce my risks of illness and death?

Physicians use a calculated number called Body Mass Index (BMI) (see BMI chart below) to determine your ideal healthy body weight for your height. Although some problems with this method have been identified (for example, waist-to-hip ratio is also important) it is still a good way to establish your health risks. It divides everyone up into 4 populations: underweight, healthy weight, overweight, and obese. Your classification may surprise you. Once again, it must be stressed that this has nothing to do with how you look. The classifications were created by looking at research and determining the weight at which your risks of illness and death increase. When a physician looks at your BMI they are trying to look inside, not outside. They are trying to help you maintain your future health and avoid premature death. Yes, it is that important!

What risks do I have if I am not at my healthy weight?

**Death:** Individuals who have a BMI in the obese range have a 50 to 100% increased risk of premature death than those in the healthy weight range. An estimated 300,000 Americans die from obesity each year.

**Coronary Artery Disease and Heart Attack:** A woman is 1.25 times more likely to develop coronary artery disease if she is overweight, and 2.65 times more likely if she is obese. A man is 1.6 times more likely if he is overweight, and 1.75 times more likely if he is obese. But remember men, we start out with a higher likelihood of developing coronary artery disease than women. The higher increase for women who are obese only brings them up to our risk level for that same range.

**Type 2 Diabetes:** Individuals who are overweight have twice the risk of diabetes as those who are a healthy weight. Those who are obese have four times the risk.

**High Blood Pressure:** The percentage of men with high blood pressure goes up from 14.9% at a healthy weight to 25% if they are overweight and 42% if they are obese. The percentage of women increases from 15.2% at a healthy weight to 33% if they are overweight to 38% if they are obese.

**High Cholesterol:** The percentage of women with high cholesterol goes up from 13% of those who are at a healthy weight to 30% of those who are overweight down to 27% of those who are obese. For men the percentage starts at 13% and increases to 21% if they are overweight and 22% if they are obese.

**Cancer:** Although the actual percentages have not yet been established, increased weight has been associated with increased mortality from many different kinds of cancer. As your BMI increases, you have a significantly higher risk of death from breast, colon, cervical, prostate, esophageal, pancreas, kidney, stomach, uterine, and ovarian cancers. For example, it has been found that a woman who gains 20 pounds or more from 18 years of age to mid-life has doubled her risk of breast cancer compared to those whose weight has remained stable.

**Other Illnesses and Disabilities:** If you are overweight or obese your chances of arthritis (particularly of the knee), sleep apnea, asthma, stress and anxiety, depression, menstrual irregularities, and urinary incontinence also increase significantly.

**Financial Burden:** Your average out-of-pocket costs for healthcare increase by \$273 per year if you are overweight and \$1043 per year if you are obese. If you are over 65 and obese, you are paying an average of \$2511 more out-of-pocket per year for your healthcare.

Weight is such a difficult and complicated part of our lives with which to deal. We have been told so many different things and sold so many different products. As you wade your way through the myriad of information, try to think about which question you are trying to answer, Question 1 or Question 2. Will this person or product help me with my health or are they trying to play on my need for acceptance? Am I doing this because I want to live to see my children grow up and I want to play with my grandkids, or am I doing this because I want to fit into a certain pair of jeans or have people look at me a certain way? I believe that once you focus more on Question 1 than Question 2, you can better find the time, energy, and motivation to follow the great advice below.

To find the references to the statistics quoted above you can go to:  
[http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/obesity/calltoaction/1\\_2.htm](http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/obesity/calltoaction/1_2.htm)  
<http://win.niddk.nih.gov/statistics/index.htm>



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## FITNESS

Regular physical activity is the key to controlling our body weight throughout our lives. The human body was made to move. A sedentary lifestyle is contrary to our bodies' design, and will without a doubt create long-term physical problems. As you have read in Dr. Brown's article above, being overweight drastically increases a person's risks of almost all the common medical conditions.

If you desire to lose weight, and you only cut your consumption of calories without increasing your activity, your body may try to compensate for the decrease in calories by decreasing its metabolic rate. This results in less calories being burned for energy, and greater storage of calories as fat. If you have been frustrated by failed diet attempts in the past, you may not find this information surprising. There is no getting around it: it takes the combination of both good nutrition and regular activity to keep weight from increasing over time.

We often blame a "slow metabolism" for our weight problems. But recent studies have shown that metabolic rates are more related to our individual levels of activity, and our intake of food, than our genetics. This is great news! It means we can do something about our metabolism and our weight. We are not passive victims of uncontrollable factors. We can control our metabolism! So let's get moving!

A well-rounded exercise routine should consist of a balance of cardiovascular training (brisk walking, etc.), flexibility training (stretching), and strength training (weights / resistance exercise). In this issue I have presented a few local walking and hiking routes as options for cardiovascular exercise. Also notice the chart on number of calories burned per minute with various activities. Some type of cardiovascular exercise, to raise your heart rate, should be conducted 4-5 times per week for at least 30 minutes per day (and longer is even better for weight loss.) I will focus on flexibility training in a future issue of PROACTIVE Times.

In this issue I would like to give you some special encouragement for strength training related to long-term weight management. Without exercise, the average person gains one to two pounds of fat per year, and it usually heads for the belly region. Fortunately though, belly fat in both men and women is highly responsive to exercise, particularly strength training.

A recent study at the University of Minnesota showed that weight training for one hour two times per week helped people decrease midlife belly fat. A similar research study at Wake For-

est University showed that the combination of diet and strength training was able to shrink fat cells in participants' abdominal areas. Diet alone did not have the same effect.

You don't need to be at the gym for several hours a day, or look like a body builder, to reap the benefits of strength training. Try committing to 30-60 minutes, 2 times per week. The amount of weight or resistance lifted is different for each person. As long as your muscles are being challenged, you will benefit.

If you would like individual assistance, both Dr. Brown and I offer personal exercise appointments in the gym at our medical clinic, PROACTIVE CARE PARTNERS. We would be happy to teach you the basics of strengthening exercise, and give you a personalized training plan, taking into consideration your individual concerns or medical conditions.

### SOURCES:

Cameron, J.L. American Journal of Physiology: Regulatory, Integrative and Comparative Physiology, April 2006.  
International Journal of Obesity, August 2006.  
Laskowski, E. Mayo Clinic Sports Medicine Center.



### LOCAL WALKING DISTANCES:

(Note: it takes approximately 15 minutes for the average person to walk one mile at a brisk pace.)

**1 mile** – The distance between Baldwin Ave. and Santa Anita Ave

**1.5 miles** – The distance from the trail head of the Mount Wilson Trail (on Mira Monte) to First Water. (Of course, you have to come back, which makes it a 3 mile round trip hike.)

**2 miles** – The loop created by the streets Sierra Madre Blvd., Baldwin, Grand View, and Sunnyside

**3 miles** – The loop around the Rose Bowl and Brookside golf course

**4 miles** – The Mount Wilson Trail from the trail head, up to Lost Canyon, and back down.



## NUTRITION

If you take the time to stop and look around you, you will notice that a majority of people are overweight and many people fall into the obese category. That observation in and of itself is discouraging. But what is even more alarming is that with obesity comes numerous risk factors for disease. In fact, obesity is statistically creeping up as a major cause of death in America, due to the medical problems it causes. If you find yourself to be overweight, I hope this issue of PROACTIVE Times helps motivate you to make some healthy lifestyle changes.

I will say, it is challenging to lead a healthy lifestyle when we are constantly bombarded with

fast food advertising, the lure of convenience foods, a lack of time, and a high daily stress level. But truthfully, all of these factors will kill us if we do not start making some changes in the way we live our lives. Let's start with four positive changes we can make.

It took many years to get to your current body weight; so, it will take some time to lose it. So the first thing we are going to keep in mind is to be patient. Try not to get discouraged when the weight is not coming off as quickly as you would like. One to two pounds a week is a safe weight loss goal. Keep your self-talk positive.

The second change you can make is in portion sizes. Over the past 50 years portions have become astronomical. Just because you are served a large portion of food, does not mean you have to eat all of it. A good rule of thumb: your starches and your meats, typically the bulk of where calories come from in any given meal, should not exceed the size of your palm. With that, listen to your body. Eat a smaller amount than you normally would, then ask yourself how you

feel. If you are satisfied, do not eat anymore. If you still feel hungry, wait 20 minutes. You most likely will be glad you stopped when you did.

The third change you can make is to choose quality foods. Notice I am not necessarily saying "low fat" foods. Quality food is defined as a food that is minimally processed, does not contain a lot of ingredients that you cannot even pronounce, and it is a food that is in its most natural state. A few examples are: whole grains like whole wheat bread, brown rice, and whole oats; fresh fruit; fresh vegetables; lean proteins like fish, chicken, and beans; smart dairy choices like yogurt (without a lot of added sugar) and real cheeses. Keep in mind the less you add to these foods (sauces, dressing, etc.), the lower the calories.

The fourth change you can make is to balance your meals. With each meal, choose a starch, a protein, a vegetable, a dairy, and a fruit. By balancing your meals, you are providing your body with adequate levels of nutrients to help prevent disease, and you are giving yourself the right proportion of each food to help you stay satisfied longer.

These are a few tips to help you live a healthier life. Each individual has different needs and concerns and may benefit from a more personalized approach. Come visit us at PROACTIVE CARE PARTNERS or call me at 626-355-8595 to set up an appointment to change your life.



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## MENTAL WELLNESS

What are some of the most common mental associations with the word "holiday?" Not surprisingly, FOOD is at the top of the list. There may be a sense of anticipation as we imagine the culinary treats of the holiday season. At the same time, this eagerness may be eclipsed by the worry of our waistline. "How in the world am I going to avoid overeating?" This dilemma becomes highlighted during the holidays, but in reality most of us struggle with overeating throughout the year.

Overeating is a serious issue, especially when it has led to obesity or being significantly overweight. It is estimated that 64.5 percent of adult Americans are overweight or obese. This is an alarming number when one considers the wide-ranging health consequences of being overweight. While the issue is multi-layered, the purpose of this article is to address a primary culprit, overeating.

Why do so many of us overeat? Overeating is a powerful habit that may be fueled by a myriad of reasons: a high stress level,

a desire to self-soothe or treat oneself, boredom, emotional pain, and of course, a love of food. We may strongly desire to change our eating habits, but this task may feel monumental. It is not uncommon for people to be flooded with memories of failed attempts.

The first step towards more balanced eating is to identify the time of day, situation, or emotional state that presents the greatest challenge. For example, working professionals are frequently most challenged in the evening. After a stressful



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If you are trying to lose weight, consider the following food and drink options:

PROACTIVE CARE PARTNERS has teamed up with The Only Place in Town restaurant in Sierra Madre, to recommend healthy menu items for you. Check out their new menu, and look for the PROACTIVE CARE PARTNERS logo next to the selected delicious healthy options!

Most people consume a huge amount of calories through drinks. When trying to cut overall calorie intake throughout your day, try a variety of hot and cold teas. Tea is naturally calorie-free. Try to avoid sweetening it, and learn to appreciate the array of natural flavors in different teas. Also, choose seltzer water instead of regular or diet soda. Squeeze a lemon, lime, or orange in the water to jazz it up!

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info@proactivecarepartners.com with your name and mailing address, Or call Josh at: 626-355-8595.

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day of work, and the parental duties have been fulfilled, there is a pull toward the refrigerator or cupboard after dinner. In moments, and without much reflection, it is easy to consume a huge amount of calories and subsequent guilt. Maybe this hard-working professional is needing self-soothing, or feels an emotional emptiness that seems like it will be filled with calories. Or maybe this person feels as if they have done nothing but expend energy for others, and now they want to indulge or treat themselves.

After identifying the time and place of vulnerability, it is important to examine the changes that can be made in the environment to make your goal more achievable. For example, staying with the scenario depicted above, the person would be advised to remove the unhealthy foods which produce the greatest temptation. Next, it is critical to come up with a plan that schedules time and activities during this typical period of overeating. The schedule can include items like exercise, listening to music, conversing with a friend, watching a favorite program, etc. The key is to schedule activities that will provide the opportunity for pleasure, emotional or physical release, or a sense of accomplishment.

To supplement this plan it is advisable to include a list of do's and don'ts, such as "I can eat as much fruit as I want but no ice cream." And this practical action plan should include a reward system. For example, "If I eat fruit for dessert for three days then I will reward myself with one scoop of ice cream on the fourth day." Your plan should be reviewed frequently, and ideally you should have an accountability partner with whom you can check in.

The benefits of developing a personal plan of action cannot be stressed enough. First, it offers the structural and behavioral alternatives that are needed to resist an intractable habit. Second, if you follow through with a realistic plan there can be a deep sense of accomplishment, reinforcing your new healthy habits, and facilitating further positive behaviors. Third, you have the opportunity to discover new and healthier ways of relieving stress and finding a sense of aliveness. Lastly, and most importantly, developing a plan of action can help you lose weight!

Source: American Obesity Association, www.obesity.org.

**At PROACTIVE CARE PARTNERS,**  
you can receive personalized care from the following providers:

- Warren S. Brown, MD** – Internal Medicine / Pediatrics  
(general primary care; exercise, nutrition, and mental wellness advice)
  - Charise L. Ivy, MD** – Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation  
(muscle, bone, nerve, joint, and spine problems; rehabilitation needs; pain management; natural hormone balance; exercise, nutrition, and mental wellness advice)
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  - Amber C. Isenhardt, MS, RD** – Registered Dietitian  
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