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Conquering Obesity

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Overview of Obesity

Obesity is a disease that affects approximately 60 million people in the United States, and women are especially affected. Over one-third of women between the ages of

20 and 74 are obese, the majority of them being African American or Mexican American. With more and more pre-packaged food and less and less activity, the number of obese people in America has steadily increased since the 1960's.

But what *is* obesity? Many people think obesity means that a person is overweight, but that's not exactly true. An *overweight* person has a surplus amount of weight that includes muscle, bone, fat, and water. An *obese* person has a surplus of body fat. Most health professionals concur that a man is obese if he has over 25 percent body fat, and a woman is obese if she has over 30 percent. Women physiologically have more body fat than men, so that why there's a difference in percentage.

It is difficult to determine the exact percentage of body fat a person has, but estimates can be made in a number of ways. First, using a tweezer-like tool called a caliper, you can measure the thickness of skin folds on different points of your body and compare the results with standardized numbers. You can also use a small device that sends a harmless electrical current through your body and measures your body fat percentage. The most commonly used method to determine if a person is obese is to look at his/her Body Mass Index (BMI). A person with a BMI over 30 is considered to be obese, and a BMI over 40 is considered to be severely obese. It's important to remember though that BMI could be misleading in pregnant or lactating women and in muscular individuals.

With obesity, comes the increased risk of diseases such as high blood pressure, Type II Diabetes, heart disease, and breast, colon, and prostate cancer. In addition, obesity has been linked to mental health conditions such as depression or feelings of shame and low self-esteem. Health experts say that even losing 10 to 15 percent of your body weight

can dramatically decrease the risk of developing these serious conditions. In addition, many obese people are discriminated against and targets of insults and other verbal abuse.

A number of factors, such as poor diet, lack of physical activity, genetics, and certain medical disorders, cause obesity, but it can be conquered. This information is not presented by a medical practitioner and is for educational and informational purposes only. The content is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read.

Obesity and its Relationship to:

Anorexia, Bulimia, and Other Special Eating Disorders

Obesity itself is not an eating disorder, but people who are obese or who fear becoming obese may develop one. Let's take a look at obesity and its relationship to special eating disorders.

Binge Eating Disorder - The most common eating disorder is binge eating disorder. Approximately 4 million Americans have this disorder. Binge eating disorder is more than just occasionally overeating. It is characterized by eating uncontrollably, quickly eating an unusually large amount of food at one sitting, even when the person is not hungry, and eating in secret because the person is embarrassed about the amount of food he/she eats.

More women than men have binge eating disorder, and most of the people who have it are overweight or obese. Binge eaters eat mostly sugar and fat, and as a result,

they may be lacking certain vitamins and nutrients. Many of them are also depressed. Treatments for this disorder include therapy and medications such as antidepressants.

Bulimia Nervosa - Binge eating is also present in another eating disorder, bulimia nervosa. It is estimated that 1.1 to 4.2 percent of females will have bulimia nervosa in their lifetime. Bulimics are caught in a binge/purge cycle. They binge eat, usually in secret, then purge to get rid of the calories just eaten. Purging may involve either self-induced vomiting after eating or using laxatives, diuretics, or enemas. People with bulimia may also exercise intensely for long periods of time in attempt to burn off the extra calories taken in during binge eating, or they may go for long periods of time without eating. Many bulimics do a combination or all of these things.

Bulimia affects more women than men and more young women in their teens and twenties than older women. These women are usually obsessed with their weight and truly believe that they are overweight even though most have a normal body weight. It can cause a number of serious health effects, including anemia, dehydration, heart problems, ruptured esophagus, stomach ulcers, and even death. Like binge eating disorder, bulimia is treated with therapy and medications.

Anorexia Nervosa - On the opposite side of binge eating is anorexia nervosa. It affects around 1 to 2 percent of the female population. Anorexia is characterized by self-starvation and obsession with food, weight, and appearance, weight loss of 15% or more below the normal body weight, and an intense fear of being fat. Many of them look emaciated, but they're convinced they are fat.

Because anorexics literally starve themselves, their bodies are severely depleted of nutrients. As a result, they develop muscular atrophy, dehydration, low blood pressure,

and brain and organ damage to name a few. As many as 10 percent of anorexics die. Most anorexics deny they have a problem until the problem gets so bad that they have to be hospitalized. Because anorexia is so life-threatening, the first stage of treatment is getting body weight back to normal. Once this is on track, therapy and medications are used.

Eating disorders are serious disorders and should not be taken lightly. If you suspect you have one or think someone you love does, please seek help. It could be a matter of life and death.

THE SCIENCE OF OBESITY: FATS & CHOLESTEROL

For years we heard that a low-fat, low-cholesterol diet would keep us healthy and help us lose weight. And many of us jumped on the bandwagon, eliminating fat and high-cholesterol foods from our diets. Well, unfortunately, we were doing it all wrong.

Instead of eliminating fat completely, we should have been eliminating the “bad fats,” the fats associated with obesity and heart disease and eating the “good fats,” the fats that actually help improve blood cholesterol levels. Before we examine the good fats and bad fats, let’s talk about cholesterol.

Cholesterol - It’s been ingrained into our brains that cholesterol causes heart disease and that we should limit our intake of foods that contain it, but dietary cholesterol is different than blood cholesterol. Cholesterol comes from two places—first, from food such as meat, eggs, and seafood, and second, from our body. Our liver makes this waxy substance and links it to carrier proteins called lipoproteins. These lipoproteins dissolve the cholesterol in blood and carry it to all parts of your body. Our body needs cholesterol to help form cell membranes, some hormones, and Vitamin D.

You may have heard of “good” and “bad” cholesterol. Well, high-density

lipoproteins (HDL) carry cholesterol from the blood to the liver. The liver processes the cholesterol for elimination from the body. If there's HDL in the blood, then less cholesterol will be deposited in the coronary arteries. That's why it's called "good" cholesterol.

Low-density lipoproteins (LDL), carry cholesterol from the liver to the rest of the body. When there is too much in the body, it is deposited in the coronary arteries. This is not good. A build-up of cholesterol in our arteries could prevent blood from getting to parts of our heart. That means that our heart won't get the oxygen and nutrients it needs, which could result in heart attack, stroke, or sudden death. So, if your LDL is higher than your HDL, you're at a greater risk for developing heart disease.

It may come as a surprise, but recent studies have shown that the amount of cholesterol in our food is not strongly linked to our blood cholesterol levels. It's the types of *fats* you eat that affect your blood cholesterol levels.

Bad Fats - There are two fats that you should limit your intake of—saturated and trans fats.

Saturated Fats - Saturated fats are mostly animal fats. You find them in meat, whole-milk products, poultry skin, and egg yolks. Coconut oil also has a high amount of saturated fat. Saturated fats raise both the good and bad blood cholesterol.

Trans Fats - Trans fats are produced through hydrogenation—heating oils in the presence of oxygen. Many products contain trans fats because the fats help them maintain a longer shelf life. Margarine also contains a high amount of trans fats. Trans fats are especially dangerous because they lower the good cholesterol, HDL and raise the bad cholesterol, LDL. Unfortunately, most products do not tell you how much trans fat it

contains, but you can find out if it's in a product by looking at the ingredient list. If the ingredients contain hydrogenated or partially-hydrogenated oils, then it contains trans fats. Fortunately in 2006, manufacturers will be required to list the amount of trans fat in their products on the nutrition labels, so it will be easier for you to find.

Good Fats - Some fats actually improve cholesterol levels.

Polyunsaturated Fats - Polyunsaturated fats are found in sunflower, corn, and soybean oils. These oils contain Omega-6, an essential fatty acid. However, most people get enough Omega-6 in their diet and instead need more Omega-3. Omega-3 is a fatty acid found in fish and walnuts.

Monounsaturated Fats - Monounsaturated fats are found in canola, peanut, and olive oils.

Both types of unsaturated fats decrease the bad cholesterol, LDL and increase the good cholesterol, HDL.

Now, just because the unsaturated fats improve your blood cholesterol levels, you don't have the go-ahead to eat all of the olive oil, butter and nuts you want. Fat of any kind does contain calories, and if you're trying to lose weight, eat fat in moderation, and stay away from saturated fats.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR WEIGHT

A pound of fat represents approximately 3500 calories of stored energy. In order to lose a pound of fat, you have to use 3500 more calories than you consume. Although this seems like a simple formula remember that your body is a thinking organism designed to protect itself. If you were to try to reduce your intake by the entire 3500 calories in one day, your body would register some type of alarm and think that there is a

state of emergency. Immediately your metabolism would slow down and no weight loss would be achieved. It's better to spread your weight loss out over a period of a week, so that you aim to reduce your caloric intake by 3500 to 7000 calories per week, resulting in weight loss of one to two pounds per week. It's generally not recommended to try to lose more than two pounds in a week. Attempting to do so may cause health risks, and on top of this you're unlikely to be successful.

In the example of attempting to lose two pounds per week, you can use a basic method of calorie counting to help you accomplish your goal. To do so, you need to figure out how many calories a person of your age, sex, and weight usually needs in a day, subtract 500 from that amount, and follow a diet that provides you with that many calories. For example, if you would ordinarily need 3000 calories in a day, you would follow a 2500-calorie a day diet. Next, figure out how much exercise a person of your weight would need to do to burn 500 calories per day, and engage in an exercise plan that will help you achieve your goal. The result is simple: 500 fewer calories consumed and 500 more calories expended equals a 1000 calorie per day deficit, which, over the course of a week adds up to 7000 calories, or two pounds. Although individual results may vary, the bottom line is if your body is consuming fewer calories than it's expending, then weight will be lost.

HOW TO CALCULATE YOUR NEEDS

In order to eat fewer calories than you need, you have to determine how many calories you actually need. Adults can calculate their approximate energy needs using the following formula:

A. Body weight multiplied by 12 (for men) or 11 (for women)
e.g., 150 lbs. x 12 = 1800

B. Activity One third body weight multiplied by the number of hours you don't sleep, typically 16 hours
150 lbs. x 1/3 = 50 x 16 = 800

C. Required Calories $A + B$ $1800 + 800 = 2600$

Thus, we determine that a 150-pound man requires approximately 2600 calories per day. The "Basal Metabolic Rate" is the number of calories a man of that weight would burn just to keep the heart beating, the lungs pumping, etc. You would just burn your basal metabolic rate worth of calories if you slept all day. Thus the "Activity" calculation is approximately the amount of calories a person would expend by spending his or her whole day sitting around. If you are engaging in activities other than sitting all day, you can increase your activity hours by the number of hours you are actually active.

Adult females can calculate their approximate energy needs using the same formula, except that the "Basal Metabolic Rate" is determined by multiplying body weight times 11 instead of 12. Children and teenagers require more calories by body weight, but the amount varies by age and by individual child. It is best to consult a physician before altering a child's diet, however activity and exercise increases won't hurt the average youth of today, and will show some benefits of controlling obesity.

Overall, this gives you a general idea of what a calorie is, how it relates to weight, and how the body turns calories into fat. This is not of course a complete diet plan. However understanding your body is a definite prerequisite to making the changes necessary to conquer obesity.

CHILDHOOD OBESITY

Along with the increase of obesity in adult, childhood obesity is on the rise. Around 15.5 percent of adolescents in the United States, aged 12 to 19 are obese. Even more alarming, about 15.3 percent of children ages 6 to 11 are obese. These children are

developing Type II Diabetes and high blood pressure at an early age. They are placing themselves at increased risk for heart disease and other obesity-related diseases. Their weight also makes them the target of bullies and children who insult and taunt them about their weight. This can ruin their self-esteem and put them at risk for depression.

Today's children make up the digital generation. They've been surrounded by computers their entire life and are not as physically active as children of past generations were. Instead of going outside and playing, they tend to hang out indoors, watching TV and playing computer and video games. Along with lack of physical activity comes the convenience of fast food. There are fast food restaurants virtually around every corner, and they have easy access to snack foods full of saturated fats and sugars. In addition, obese parents are more likely to have obese children. The reason for this is two-fold. First, obese parents probably pass down their poor habits to their children. Second, genetics plays a role in obesity.

It's important for parents to be role models to their children and emphasize the importance of physical activity and healthy eating. Parents can create healthy environments for their children by doing regular physical activities, such as biking, swimming, or walking together. They should encourage their children to participate in sports, dance, martial arts, and etcetera. This allows children to develop an appreciation of physical activity and enjoy exercising.

When it comes to eating, parents need to implement diets rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole-grains. They can make eating enjoyable and healthy by preparing food together and eating together as a family. Fast-food should be limited and reserved for special occasions. Way too often, we reward ourselves for a job well done with food.

Look for other ways to reward your children for doing a great job, such as a special shopping trip or a day with just mom or dad.

POPULAR DIETARY TREATMENTS

Americans spends millions of dollars each year on diet books, products, and weight-loss plans. With all of this dieting, you would think obesity would be decreasing every year instead of increasing. So, why aren't they working?

Because people are doing the wrong things! These popular diets often offer promises of quick weight-loss with no hunger, and the majority of those dieters who do succeed end up gaining the weight back plus some within a year. First, we'll discuss some of these fad diets and then talk about what you can do to lose weight and keep it off.

FAD DIETS

High-Fat, Low-Carbohydrate Diets - Millions of Americans have joined the low-carb craze and started high-fat, low-carb diets such as the Atkins Diet, and the Zone Diet. They are made up of about 60% fat, 10% carbohydrate, and 30% protein. These diets say you can eat high amounts of fat and protein while getting very low amounts of carbohydrates in the form of vegetables. The main premise of the low-carb diet is that a diet low in carbohydrates leads to a reduction in body's production of insulin. The end result is that fat and protein stores will be used for energy. So you stuff yourself full of unlimited amounts of meat, cheese, and butter, and only eat a small portion of carbohydrates.

People who start the diet usually lose a great amount of weight, but it's not permanent weight loss. Instead of burning fat, the lose water and precious muscle tissue. Furthermore, these diets are low in several nutrients and contain excess amounts of

cholesterol and saturated fats, substances that increase the risk of heart disease. Plus, regardless of what they claim, the enormous amounts of protein put a strain on your kidneys.

Moderate Fat Diets - Next, there are the moderate fat diets. Moderate fat diets include diets like Weight Watchers, the USDA Food Guide Pyramid, and Jenny Craig. These diets are made up of about 25% fat, 60% carbohydrate, and 15% protein. They encourage the intake of whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and essential fatty acids found in foods like olive oil and salmon. These diets are usually nutritionally balanced if the dieter eats a variety of foods from all categories. For example, Weight Watchers operates on a point system where foods get a number of points based on calorie, fiber, and fat content. Dieters get a specific amount of points they can use for the day. While it's not encouraged, they may choose to spend most of their points on carbohydrates instead of balancing it out. This could lead to deficiencies in nutrients such as calcium, iron, and zinc. However, if followed properly, these diets are probably the most successful for losing weight and keeping it off.

Low and Very Low-Fat Diets - Finally, you have your low-fat and very low-fat diets. Diets in this category include the Dr. Dean Ornish's Diet and the Pritikin Plan, among others. They are made up of about 13% fat, 70% carbohydrates, and 16% protein. These diets are mostly vegetarian diets and don't recommend eating a lot of meat. Like the low-carb diets, you can eat unlimited amounts of certain foods. Because you can't eat a lot of meat, these diets are deficient in zinc, vitamin B12, and essential fatty acids. Also, it is so restrictive that people find a hard time staying on it for life and end up gaining their weight back.

WEIGHT-LOSS RECOMMENDATIONS

So what should you eat if you're trying to lose weight? The majority of obese people eat too much, and they eat too much of the bad stuff. But even if you're eating the good stuff, you can still eat too much. So, you first need to know what to eat, and second, you need to learn how to recognize when you're full and when you're really hungry.

It's also important to remember that your weight should be lost gradually. Don't expect miracles overnight like some fad diets promise. When you first start dieting, you will probably lose more water weight, therefore you may be losing more pounds initially. But, if you're doing it right, your weight loss will slow down to an average of one to two pounds per week. Studies have shown that you can only lose three pounds of fat per week, so anything over that is water loss or muscle loss, which you need to stay away from.

AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION RECOMMENDATIONS

The American Heart Association recommends that you eat a variety of foods from the different food groups. In order for women to lose one to two pounds a week, they should consume between 1200 and 1500 calories a day. Men should consume between 1500 and 1800 calories a day if they want to lose one to two pounds a week. Let's examine the different food groups the American Heart Association suggests you consume.

Meat, Poultry, Fish - You should consume no more than 6 ounces of meat, poultry, and fish per day. Lean cuts of poultry and fish have fewer calories than fatty red meat, but you can find lean cuts of red meat in your supermarket.

Breads, Cereals, Starches - This food group includes bread, cereal, pasta, rice,

and starchy vegetables like potatoes and corn. You can have six servings from this food group a day. A serving size is 1 slice of bread, 1 cup of cereal, and 1 cup of rice, pasta, or $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of starchy veggies. So, if you eat Remember here, that whole grain is best. When you can, choose whole-grain bread, brown rice, and whole-wheat pasta instead of their white counterparts that have been stripped of nutrients and fiber.

Vegetables and Fruits - Fruits and vegetables are essential parts of your diet because they contain a variety of vitamins and nutrients. You can have five or more servings a day of fruits and vegetables. A serving size is $\frac{1}{2}$ cup to 1 cup of cooked and raw vegetables, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruit juice, or one medium piece of fruit. Aim to choose a variety of colors in your diet because they have different vitamins and minerals. Let's examine the colors you should include in your diet every day.

Red - Red fruits and vegetables contain nutrients that help keep your heart and urinary tract healthy. They also help with your memory and lower your risk of some cancers. When it comes to red, choose from apples, cherries, strawberries, tomatoes, red peppers, and radishes, to name a few.

Yellow/Orange - Yellow and orange fruits and vegetables contain antioxidants that keep your heart, vision, and immune system healthy. Some yellow and orange fruits and veggies include apricots, lemons, peaches, cantaloupe, yellow squash, carrots, and sweet potatoes.

Green - Green fruits and vegetables help lower your risk of some cancers and keep your bones and teeth strong. Choose foods like green grapes, broccoli, avocados, spinach, green apples, and limes.

Blue/Purple - Blue and purple fruits and vegetables lower the risk of some cancers

and keep your urinary tract healthy. They also help maintain your memory function. Some delicious blue and purple foods are blackberries, blueberries, raisins, plums, eggplant, and purple cabbage.

White - White foods promote your heart health, and if you already have healthy cholesterol, they'll help maintain those levels. Bananas, pears, cauliflower, mushrooms, and garlic are tasty options you can fit into your meal plan.

Milk Products - If you love dairy products, the good news is that you can still eat them and lose weight. However, choose low-fat or fat-free products. They contain the same vitamins and minerals, taste good, and lower your cholesterol all at the same time. Adults aged 19-50 should have three servings of milk products per day. A serving of dairy is 1 cup of fat-free or low-fat milk, 1 cup of fat-free or low-fat yogurt, 1 ounce of low-fat cheese (stay away from fat-free cheeses—they have too much sodium) or a ½ cup of low-fat cottage cheese.

Fats - You should have no more than five servings of fats a day in the form of oil, nuts, seeds, olives, avocado, and mayonnaise. Fat servings include one teaspoon of oil, three teaspoons of nuts or seeds, 5-10 olives, 1/8 of an avocado and two teaspoons of mayonnaise. If you love the taste of butter on your vegetables, use a fat-free imitation butter spray. It really doesn't taste that much different.

SURGICAL & MEDICAL SOLUTIONS

Health professionals always recommend weight loss through diet and exercise, but in some instances they will perform weight-loss surgery, known as bariatric surgery. As with any surgery, it comes with many risks, and it's not a solution for everyone. In order to qualify for surgery, most people must be severely obese or obese with serious

medical conditions. Doctors will usually have patients attempt to lose weight through diet and exercise or drug therapy before agreeing to surgery. Patients must also understand that with surgery comes a lifelong commitment to changes in eating habits and exercise. It's not a "quick-fix."

There are two types of obesity surgery, restrictive and malabsorptive.

Restrictive Surgery - Restrictive surgery means just what it sounds like—it restricts food intake by making the stomach smaller. Gastric bypass is the most common type of restrictive surgery.

Malabsorptive Surgery - Malabsorptive surgery is less common than restrictive surgery because it's riskier. These surgeries limit the amount of calories and nutrients the body absorbs, causing an increased risk of malnutrition and vitamin deficiencies.

Gastric bypass - In gastric bypass, the stomach is stapled to create a tiny pouch that can only hold about one ounce of food. The small intestine is then cut, and part of it is sewed directly onto the pouch. This procedure directs food from the small pouch directly into the second section of the small intestine instead of going through the entire stomach the first section of the small intestine. This limits the number of calories absorbed by the body. Most people who have gastric bypass lose around half of their excess weight, and many keep it off for 10 years or more.

As successful as it may be, it's not free of risk. Approximately one in 200 people die from the procedure, and people who have the surgery may experience side effects such as iron and B-12 deficiency, gallstones, and bleeding ulcers. Also, since the stomach is so small, eating too much could cause vomit or severe pain.

Malabsorptive Surgery - Malabsorptive surgery is less common than restrictive

surgery because it's riskier. These surgeries limit the amount of calories and nutrients the body absorbs, causing an increased risk of malnutrition and vitamin deficiencies.

Drug Therapy - Drug therapy is available for people with a BMI 30 or over with no medical conditions or for people with a BMI of over 27 with two or more obesity-related conditions. Like surgery, drugs do not take the place of a regular diet and exercise program.

With regards to other medical solutions, there are three most commonly prescribed FDA-approved weight-loss medications. They are Orlistat, Sibutramine, and Phentermine.

Orlistat - Orlistat is a fat-blocker. It blocks about 30 percent of dietary fat from being absorbed in the body. This undigested fat is removed from the body in bowel movements. Patients usually take one capsule three times a day with each meal. Side effects include oily bowel movements, stomach pain, increased number of bowel movements, and irregular menstrual periods.

Sibutramine - Sibutramine is an appetite suppressant. People normally take it once a day with or without food. It is approved for long-term use, but it can be habit-forming. Side effects include headache, constipation, insomnia, mood changes, and stomach pain.

Phentermine - Phentermine is also an appetite suppressant. People usually take it one single dose in the morning or three times a day 30 minutes before meals. Phentermine is not prescribed for long-term use and is usually only prescribed for three to six weeks. It can be habit-forming. Side effects of phentermine include dry mouth, unpleasant taste, diarrhea, constipation, and vomiting.

NATURAL ALTERNATIVES

There are a variety of natural alternatives to consider when seeking to conquer obesity. Many prefer to utilize natural alternatives rather than resorting to appetite suppressants and surgical procedures. While natural alternatives provide an option that is often more healthy, using natural methods does take time and patience, and a level of commitment that is a bit higher than choosing to use pharmaceutical or surgical means. Which natural method of weight loss or weight control you use depends upon several factors, including what types of foods you like, the amount of time you are willing to dedicate, and your schedule. All natural alternatives require some form of exercise, so rather than discuss them here we will discuss exercise routines in the next section.

USING AYURVEDA

Ayurveda is an ancient Sanskrit word meaning *science of life*, and actually is a branch of traditional Indian medicine. Using Ayurveda means actually changing not only the way you eat, but also the way that you see yourself and your body. In Ayurveda, you don't objectivize your body as a "thing", but realize your body as a system of energy that is constantly changing. Realizing that 98% of the atoms in your body are replaced completely within less than one year helps you to understand that nothing about your body is static, and if you wish it to change, then change is actually easy. What needs to be done is to retrain the body and its cells to think differently, and to stop responding randomly to external stimuli. This is putting an end to what is called self-referral.

The first step is very simple; when you are hungry then eat, but when you are not don't eat. Although this seems over simplistic, in this practice is the key to conquering most cases of obesity. Americans eat impulsively more so than any other culture in the world, and that means we eat often when we are not hungry. We tend to eat because we

see food we like, or when we sit down to watch a movie, or perhaps when we are sad or feeling depressed. We have learned to use food as a pacifier, a stimulant, and a hobby. The key is unlearning this behavior.

Increasing your awareness of actual hunger, including the time you are actually eating, will help you limit your diet. You should eat only when you feel your tank on empty so to speak. Eat to satisfaction, the point where the sensation of hunger has left, not to the point where you are uncomfortable and cannot eat another bite. Start a log, preferably in a small pocket notepad that you can carry with you to work and use at home, and record each time you feel hungry and when you ate just to satisfaction. Within two weeks time, your body will begin to significantly be retrained to eat only when hungry, and only for nourishment. Once this two week time period has passed, begin to set definite times when you eat your meals: a set time for breakfast, lunch and dinner everyday, without fail. When doing this, make lunch your largest meal, with very small breakfasts and dinners.

The next step would be to eat right for your body type. In Ayurveda there are three basic body types: *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*. The Vata body is one that belongs to a person that is very active and quick, has a very thin build, gets cold easily, tends to speak very quickly and be very talkative, usually has dry skin, and is a very light sleeper. Pitta characteristics include being very orderly, forceful, very intolerant of hot weather, easy to perspire, having reddish, sandy, or blond hair, stubborn, intolerant of spicy foods, very self-critical and critical of others, determined, and impatient. The Kapha body is a person that naturally moves slow, gains weight easily and loses it slowly if at all, tends to be thick-built, is ironically good at skipping meals without discomfort, has a tendency to

develop phlegm, needs a full eight hours of sleep to feel rested, sleeps very deeply, tends to have dark thick hair, tends to be very affectionate and understanding, usually walks slowly, and generally enjoys a steady level of energy. Each type of person has different dietary needs. Some people of course share several of these factors equally, and therefore have combination bodies. The descriptions given are only a general guide; for a detailed test, visit online at <http://www.ayurvedahc.com/aytest.htm> and take the free test to determine your type.

Generally, one who has a Kapha body type has the hardest time with losing weight, so we will concentrate on foods that reduce the Kapha influence. If you consume milk, switch to low-fat milk instead of whole milk, and boiling the milk before drinking it makes it easier to digest. It is best to drink the milk warm, because cold milk increases your Kapha. If you decide you cannot tolerate warm milk, you should give up milk all together. Eat plenty of foods that are spicy or bitter, yet avoid salt. Avoid red meat if you eat meat, and eat white meat chicken or turkey, or opt for fish. Beans are also an excellent source of protein when avoiding or cutting back on meat consumption. Eat plenty of light fruits, such as pears, apples, cranberries, and pomegranates. Sweeten your foods when necessary with honey instead of sugar, as honey reduces Kapha very well. When choosing grains, barley, corn, buckwheat, rye, and millet are very light grains that are good for your consumption. All vegetables are good to eat, however vegetables that are especially beneficial to reduce Kapha include eggplant, radishes, beets, all green leafy vegetables, asparagus, broccoli, potatoes, cabbage, carrots, pumpkin, and celery. In Ayurveda, food is preferably prepared by cooking, since it makes for easier digestion than eating raw foods, however an occasional salad is not harmful. Avoid caffeine and alcohol, fried foods,

packaged foods, soft drinks, and deep-fried foods.

Low-Carb High Protein Diets

This type of diet became very popular as of recently due to the promotion of the ever-popular Atkins Diet Craze. This diet is very popular because there is no calorie counting involved, and many foods that many people love to eat are allowed on the diet. Further, the Atkins diet is a high-protein diet, which means that weight lost during this diet will not result in lost muscle mass, since protein is the main nutrient needed for maintaining healthy muscle tone. This diet basically eliminates carbohydrates, which are simple sugars or foods that break down into simple sugars. These serve as empty calories in your diet, providing no nutrients yet many calories.

While we won't cover the Atkins diet here, we can give you basics of the high-protein, low-carb diet. First let us identify carbohydrates. Sugar, including powdered sugar, granulated white sugar, brown sugar, or any type of sugar you can think of, is the main carbohydrate that you would need to eliminate. All types of pastas count as carbohydrates, meaning all noodle and spaghetti products must be eliminated. Starches of any type, such as white rice, potatoes and potato chips, need to be eliminated. Cereals are mostly carbohydrates and should be avoided entirely during the diet phase. Because of the low-carb craze, there are many low-carb options of sodas, milk, ice cream, bread, beer, and wine available in the average supermarket. If you do consume these, be sure to do so only occasionally and in moderation, even if it is a low-carb type. Otherwise, the aforementioned foods should be eliminated entirely when not of the low-carb type. Beware of foods that contain hidden sugars, like bacon, barbeque sauce, ketchup, salad dressing, cough syrup, and fruit juice. As strange as it may seem, fruits and fruit juices

should be eliminated while in the weight loss phase of this diet, as they are nearly pure carbohydrates. Anything made with flour needs to be eliminated during the weight loss phase, since as mentioned earlier they are high in carbohydrates.

Now what can you eat? Well, the good news is that you can eat all meats, fish, poultry and seafood, except prepared meats like bacon and honey baked ham, which are high in sugar. Skip the bread and have meat and salad, or meat in your salad. Eggs are very low-carb friendly, but be sure to skip the mayonnaise or salad dressing unless it is low-carb type mayonnaise or dressing. Any type of vegetable is fine, but be sure to realize that when making that salad that tomatoes are actually a fruit, and you want to limit your consumption of them at least during the weight loss phase. Choose brown rice as your starch replacement, as it is low in carbohydrates comparatively to potatoes, bread or white rice. Cheese is good in limited amounts, as this is a high-protein, low-carb food. Butter and cream can be used, but should be consumed in limited amounts. One complex carbohydrate that is good is fiber, as it does not break down into simple sugar, and helps the body with elimination. Further, fiber fills you up quickly without adding significant calories, so hunger pangs are fought off successfully.

Finally, make sure you are drinking at least eight 8-ounce glasses of water a day minimum in addition to any other liquid you may consume. Dehydration often masquerades as hunger and causes overeating. Of course, again exercise is a necessary and vital part of your diet plan, which we will cover in the next section on exercise.

Once you lose the weight that you set out to lose, the weight loss phase of your diet is over. Of course keep in mind that you are making lifestyle changes, not going on fad or binge diets. This means that you will not go back to your old eating habits. Instead

you will introduce certain foods back into your diet in moderation. For example, you may add a couple of strips of bacon once a week to your meal plan. You can enjoy small portions of deserts of any kind, simply in moderation. It is best to avoid soft drinks all together, or opt for the low-carb type permanently. If you do introduce any other carbohydrate-laden foods, be sure to do so only at one meal, and in small portions. Reducing carbohydrates will become a lifestyle to you when following this plan, one is very likely to boost your overall energy level and help you keep the weight off.

DETOXIFICATION AND LIVE FOOD DIET

Another natural alternative is to detoxify one's body and switch to a live food diet. Although this dietary change has permanent benefits that are excellent for not only losing and maintaining weight, it heightens energy and often eliminates toxins that cause a variety of illnesses and conditions that commonly plague the body. With this lifestyle change, in addition to weight loss, chronic illnesses such as migraine headaches, insomnia, skin problems, brittle hair, constipation, arthritis, and many others are alleviated permanently. The drawback for some is again the level of commitment that it takes to achieve. Far from impossible, this option takes a level of commitment to health and general well being that is strong enough to want to give up foods that are toxic to your body.

The first step one should take is to cleanse the body. If you suffer from high toxicity that is currently showing itself as chronic illness, you may want to consult with a natural practitioner before embarking on a cleansing routine, as cleansing may exacerbate many symptoms of the body's ailments as the body attempts to correct itself. Even if you are not highly toxic and have no signs of chronic illness, you will likely experience slight

headaches, chills, irritability, and fatigue as your body is releasing toxins. This is quite natural and no cause for alarm, since your body is releasing a large level of toxins during this time and symptoms of all of the illness they cause over time are going to show up.

The best way to begin is by embarking upon a juice fast. That's right, take nothing in except juice, herbal tea, and protein drinks for three days. There will be no malnourishment here, since juices are highly concentrated foods, and the protein drinks will add the necessary protein you would normally get by consuming solid food. In fact, drinking one glass of carrot and celery juice is the equivalent of eating two whole carrots and three celery stalks. Imagine trying to get a daily serving of six large carrots and nine celery stalks each day, in addition to other foods; this would be quite burdensome. Yet consuming just three glasses of carrot-celery juice takes care of that daily allotment. Even if you were able to eat all of these vegetables daily, you would not get as full a benefit from these foods as you do when you juice. Juicing separates the vitamins and minerals from the fiber, which can trap the nutrients and block your body from absorbing them. Also, because raw vegetables and fruits are rich in enzymes, they serve as a great energy booster.

There are certain juices and drink additives that will help you to lose weight as well as detoxify, because they have natural chemicals in them that aid in weight loss. These can be taken during your initial juice fast, and continuously throughout your new diet program:

- 1 Pineapple- contains bromelain
- 2 Cucumber-contains invertase
- 3 Tomato, apple, persimmon, and peach-contains lactase

- 4 All green plants, wheat germ, flax-contain lipase
- 5 Papaya-contains papain
- 6 Beet leaves and banana-contain maltase
- 7 Kale, spinach, lettuce-contain hericellulase

These nutrients are vital to losing weight and preventing obesity. It is best to purchase organic fruits and vegetables for juicing, as non-organic produce contains high levels of toxic pesticides, and will defeat the purpose of detoxification. Even when purchasing and using organic produce, be sure to wash your fruits and vegetables thoroughly. Use a vegetable brush, available at many supermarkets or at your local health food store, and scrub lightly yet thoroughly under running water. The vegetable brush may also be used to clean the steel strainer inside your juicer when cleaning up. Juicing with the peeling on is fine for most fruits and vegetables, except of course those with exceptionally thick skin, such as kiwis, papayas, oranges, grapefruits, tangerines, and bananas. Do not peel away the “bitter” on oranges, grapefruits, and tangerines; this is the white part of the fruit directly under the skin, but do remove the seeds of all fruits as they are very bitter. Bananas do not juice well in a juicer and should be juiced in a blender instead. Juices should be drunk immediately after juicing ideally. However if your schedule does not allow you to juice several times a day, refrigerating your juices in a glass container is suitable for one day without losing vital nutrients.

As for protein, you can use one of the many all-natural protein powders found in your local health store or health section of your local supermarket. These powders can be added directly to your juices as suggested on the packaging. You may want to use a blender to blend the powder into the juice.

Be sure to drink eight 8-ounce glasses of purified water along with your juicing during your juice fast, and everyday from now on as a matter of fact. Pure water is vital to aiding your body in releasing toxins. Also, always drink your juices slowly, aiding their digestion and savoring the taste. Savoring taste is very important not only for your palate, but for your weight also. When we do not taste our food and drink properly, we have a tendency to over-consume and gain weight. Sip your juice the same way someone may sip a cocktail; make it an enjoyable experience.

Once you detoxify, you will want to make a complete diet change. Meat should be eliminated from the diet if at all possible, as should all animal products. Despite not being the best food for you in general, livestock is raised in such a way these days that makes it dangerous to eat meat. Diseases such as Mad Cow and E. coli are infecting more and more supplies of meat, poultry, and dairy products. Due to mass processing plants, it is hard to track when an infected animal is added to a mass meat supply of many tons, unlike the days when a cow was taken to a local butcher shop and butchered. Additionally, hormones being used to fatten up livestock in today's market can seriously alter your body chemistry and cause a number of chronic illnesses over time. If you do not wish to become a vegetarian, substitute with fish on occasion, or purchase organically raised and prepared meats and poultry from your health food store on occasion.

You should incorporate as many organic live foods into your diet as possible, picking a variety of fresh vegetables for salads, as well as continuing a healthy juicing regimen. You may want to employ your blender a bit more in this phase, using it to add ice and even nuts to your protein and fruit shakes to make smoothies. Nuts make a good addition to your diet both in smoothies and whole, adding a good amount of protein to the

diet. Be sure to skip dessert while you are trying to lose weight, and definitely eliminate all foods made with white sugar and white flour permanently from your diet.

Definitely lose the alcohol and caffeine, as they cause mineral deficiencies due to the diuretic effect, cause great stress on our adrenal glands, and have been proven contributors to anxiety and insomnia. Regular caffeine use has been linked to incidences of cancer and prostate trouble in men, as well as fibrocystic breasts and uterine fibroids in women. Alcohol use seriously depletes B and C vitamins, calcium magnesium, and manganese. Of course, the most well known danger of alcohol use is its detrimental effects on the liver, causing possible deadly cirrhosis of the liver. Taking about 1000 mg of the amino acid L-glutamine will help your body replenish after alcohol use, and will cut down on cravings for alcohol as well. Nicotine should be discontinued also, as this is a toxin that is well known for its dangers and high addiction factor.

Living toxin-free and eating a diet high in live foods will help you feel rejuvenated and help cut down on cravings. This is the long-term effect you desire for shedding weight and keeping the weight off. Of course, as with any long-term solution, dedication is needed. Just remember that this is not only about your looks, it is about your health and well being

EXERCISE MANAGEMENT

Exercise is vital to shedding excess weight and keeping it off. The body was meant to be active, and that is often a challenge in today's often-sedentary lifestyles. White collar workers, security workers, and drivers make up a large part of the workforce, and get very little exercise daily. Especially if you fit into this category, a concerted effort must be made in order to ensure that an exercise regimen is followed that will afford you

a level of activity that will provide the amount of activity you need to stay healthy and avoid obesity.

People often dread exercise, projecting a grueling task that will leave them without energy and with sore muscles. This does not have to be and should not be the case. It is not necessary to employ a vigorous workout in order to have an effective exercise plan. Any regular exercise plan that is cardiovascular, raising the heart rate for at least a half hour straight, will do wonders for your body. Simply taking a walk, starting slow, then working your way up to power walking, is an excellent method of exercise. If your time is limited, or you live in a location where weather may impede your workout schedule, you may want to invest in a treadmill so that you can work out daily without interruption. Riding a bike, whether a regular bike or a stationary one, can be equally as effective. Again, you may want to employ both options to add variety, yet to make sure that weather does not impede you from your daily routine. Skipping days becomes addictive, and before you know it weeks begin to compile where you have not worked out, so avoid the trap.

In Ayurveda, walking is also highly recommended. Additionally, simple movement exercises are employed. If you have the time, seek a yoga class in your area. Styles of yoga can range from mild to vigorous, and provide conscious movement as suggested in Ayurveda. Such conscious movement is vital to conquering obesity.

If you have children that are not active, whether they are obese or not, you should definitely engage them in some sort of physical activity on a daily basis. Growing the habit of activity is key in avoiding obesity later in life, and controlling it during youth. Sedentary lifestyles brought on by modern phenomena of excess television watching,

consuming fast and packaged foods, and playing video games are causing marked increases in obesity amongst children. Be aware of your children's lifestyle and promote activity amongst them. Encourage them to engage in activities away from the television for a couple of hours a day, preferably engaged in an organized physical activity. It is a habit that they will often take with them into adulthood and benefit from for a lifetime.

WEIGHT TRAINING

For those that would like a more vigorous workout plan, weight training is a viable option that can combine building muscle tone and working the cardiovascular system. Weight training tones your muscles and raises your metabolism, which helps your body burn more calories not only when exercising, but also while you sleep. Weight training reverses the natural decline in your metabolism, which begins around age 30; therefore this is something to think about for all those who have reached that age. Working with weights can produce a great deal of energy, and a full workout works almost all of the 650 muscles in your body. Looking toward long-term benefits, weight training strengthens bones, which can reduce your risk of developing osteoporosis. This of course is of very big concern amongst women, since osteoporosis afflicts women much more than men.

Many women worry that weight training will make them muscular and bulky like a man's; yet you must keep in mind that men and women have different muscular structures, therefore weight training will not develop big muscles on women, just toned muscles. Not only is weight training a routine that makes you strong, it is a routine that trains the body to build muscle instead of fat, takes stress off key areas of the body such as the lower back, making you less prone to injury in that area. Since high blood pressure

or hypertension is a big concern with those who are obese, it is welcome news that weight training decreases your resting blood pressure. Weight training has also been proven to increase your blood level of HDL cholesterol, which is commonly referred to as “good cholesterol. Overall health is definitely improved through weight training.

It is best to start with a plan, which may be joining a gym where you can regularly go to get a full workout, or purchasing a home workout system that uses resistance instead of weights but produces similar results. You must assess what type of person you are, and make the appropriate decision from there. If you like the idea of going out somewhere daily for your workout, welcoming the change of scenery and benefiting from the comradery of others who are also training, then you may want to opt for a gym membership. However, if you know you are the type that enjoys working alone and will not work out unless its in the convenience of your home where you do not have to get dressed and go out, then the home gym system option is for you. Only you can make this assessment of yourself. Some popular home gym systems include CrossBar™ and BowFlex™. Many quality home workout systems exist, but of course none work when not used, so be sure that you remain focused and dedicated to your plan.

Whatever exercise plan you choose, it is best to exercise first thing in the morning, every morning. Our bodies were made to be active daily, and when exercise is performed in the morning, people are more successful at exercising consistently. Make your exercise as enjoyable as possible. Consider utilizing music, a book on tape, or watching television during your workout, depending on the type and location of your workout. If you're a walker for example, you may want to get a good CD player to listen to music or books on tape. If you're exercising inside, you may want to setup a television

set or a stereo so that you can watch or listen while exercising. Whatever you do, make your exercise experience one you look forward to each day.

BEHAVIORAL CHANGES

Speaking of dedication and focus, changing your behavior is a key component to conquering obesity. Crash diets that cause people to lose weight drastically almost always backfire because there is no change in behavior and habits. Obesity is a lifestyle, and conquering obesity is a lifestyle also. Losing focus is a common problem with those who are trying to lose weight and keep it off.

Most of us do not have goals, and are generally not in the habit of goal setting. Many of us think we have goals, because we have stated what we want. However, if we haven't written them down in completely positive language, and eliminated goals that conflict with each other, then we don't truly have goals. What is positive language? A statement that uses positive words and not negative words toward achieving a goal. An example of a positive statement would be, "I weigh 150 pounds. I am fit and trim, and full of energy." To the contrary, examples of negative statements are, "I will not be fat anymore. I will not overeat. I am sick and tired of feeling sick and tired. I will not eat fattening foods." While these negative statements appear to say what you want at first, they truly only say what you don't want, and the subconscious mind does not know the difference between want and not, it only focuses on subjects. Therefore, if you speak of not being fat, it only hears being fat; if it hears you speak of not overeating, it only hears overeating; and if it hears you being sick and tired of being sick and tired, it only actually registers being sick and tired. The subconscious is very literal, so use positive language at all times. Notice I also made the statement in the present tense, even though I may

currently be 210 pounds and not 160. The subconscious mind does not register the words “I will” either, because it has no concept of past and future. Think of dreams; have you ever dreamed of something and it seemed like it was an episode that took forever, yet when you awoke you realized the entire dream sequence took place in minutes while you dozed off? Or have you experienced a dream where people you know may look as they did many years ago? This is because the subconscious is simply storing images and words as they happen, not in past or future tense. It is important therefore to speak into your life what you want, and not what you don’t want.

Developing your goals is a process, and will help you in your quest to becoming motivated and staying that way. Ask yourself why you want to lose weight. Carry around a notepad and pen for a few days and write down every benefit you can think of that relates to weight loss. You will use these to develop not only a goal, but also a mission statement. Some common examples are wanting to have more energy to spend quality time with family and friends, being able to fit into all your clothes, improving your health for longevity, wanting to feel comfortable in public, desiring to climb stairs or perform daily tasks without becoming breathless or fatigued, wanting to be more active with your children, or wanting to wear a nice outfit you saw. In a few days, you should be able to write a statement similar to this: “By August 31st I weigh 150 pounds. I eat foods that are healthy for me, and I enjoy them. I am able to fit into that nice bikini I saw at the beach shop last month, and I look awesome in it. I am able to run and play with my children and have boundless energy. I remain energized throughout the day and am very alert at work. I feel great while following my new meal and exercise plan, and am happy that I am making changes that will improve my health and longevity, so that I am alive and healthy

for myself and my loved ones for a long time.” Of course you will customize your statement to fit your life, but you get the point. Make sure all of your statements are positive and in the here and now.

The next step is to keep focused on your goals. Once you write your statement down, keep it posted where you can see it daily, such as next to your bathroom mirror, or stuck on the refrigerator door. You must keep your goals literally in front of you in order to maintain focus. The mind begins to steer you in the direction that you are focused on, just as you steer a car down the road. Letting your goals out of your focus is like looking down or away while driving, or letting go of the steering wheel: eventually you will crash. Let's avoid the crash and plan for success.

The first week is always the hardest regardless of what your eating plan is, whether it be low fat, low carbohydrate or anything else you will no doubt feel the uncomfortable feeling of hunger pangs at first. The good news is that if you can make it through the first two weeks you will have a significantly better chance of meeting your goal. Your appetite will become significantly smaller, which will likely escape your notice at first.

Realize that you aim to succeed by all means, but not meeting your goal does not mean total failure. If you end up cheating or missing a scheduled workout its not the end of the world. Beware of beating yourself up and deeming yourself a failure, and instead accept that everyone makes mistakes and get back up on your horse and right back on your plan. We're all human and we are bound to fail once and awhile.

Another obstacle especially amongst Americans is that we tend to want instant gratification. Perhaps it is the trappings of automated society and high standards of living,

but we want things to happen here and now. Keep in mind that this is a process, and things will not happen overnight. There is never something for nothing, so you must give things time to work. Especially with the more natural lifestyle-change plans mentioned earlier, it can take weeks before you see improvements; give it time. If after about a month you don't see anything happening, you can then assess what you are doing and make some adjustments.

It is great to build alliances with people who are striving to reach the same type of goals you are, and avoid spending excessive time with those who do not share the same goal you do—at least in the beginning of your new regimen. You might want to make an assessment of who you spend time with currently and what practices you engage in with them. Do you have regular associates that you binge with? Do you often go out with friends or family and visit restaurants that serve unhealthy foods? Although this is probably the hardest thing to do, you will have to excuse yourself from such activities for a while in order to accomplish your goal as you build up will power. After a few weeks, your habits will have changed and you will be able to resist temptation a lot better than you used to. One good practice is to exercise with a friend. Studies show that people who exercise with a friend are more successful at exercising consistently. You can keep each other accountable. Knowing that someone is waiting for you to exercise with them can be great motivation to show up and get it done.