

## **NATUROPATHIC TIPS ON HEALTHY WEIGHT MANAGEMENT**

**By Dr. Jeannie Doig, ND, HBSc**

Obesity is a North American epidemic that affects 30% of the population. It is correlated with serious health risks such as cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes. Long-term, successful control of obesity is one of the greatest clinical challenges. Few people want to be overweight; most express a strong desire to lose weight; yet only 5% of obese individuals can attain and maintain “normal” body weight for a year or more. The successful program for obesity is consistent with the basic foundations of good health- a positive mental attitude, a healthy lifestyle (especially important is regular exercise), a health-promoting diet, and supplementary measures.

The naturopathic approach to weight management involves an individualized assessment to address the root cause of weight gain for each individual. A health-promoting diet involving plenty of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, legumes, protein, and healthy fats is recommended. Specific food sensitivities such as wheat and dairy are assessed in each individual through elimination diets and food sensitivity testing. Avoiding refined white flour such as bagels, cold cereal, noodles, pancakes, pasta, pizza dough, pie crust, spaghetti, waffles, white bread, English muffins, hamburger buns, and white rice is recommended. Also, avoiding sugar (sucrose, fructose, maltose, dextrose, polydextrose, corn syrup, maple syrup, molasses, sorbitol, maltodextrin) and artificial sweeteners (Aspartame, Sucralose) is important. All processed foods and snack foods are eliminated, such as corn chips, potato chips, pretzels, tortilla chips, trail mix as well condiments containing sugar such as ketchup, BBQ sauces, fish sauces, and relishes.

Although this type of diet seems restrictive to the typical North American there are so many foods and recipes out there that many people discover while on this diet, or lifestyle change. I coach my patients by teaching them about new foods and recipes they can try. The goal of the Naturopathic weight management diet is to create a permanent lifestyle change. This is in opposition to Quick fix or fad diets, such as the Atkins Diet, which are not recommended for the long term since they can cause serious health consequences such as kidney and liver damage.

Lifestyle factors need to be addressed for each individual and an exercise routine is recommended. TV watching decreases metabolism and promotes a sedentary lifestyle. Watching just 2 hours of TV a day increases your chance of obesity by 23%. High stress also leads to inability to lose weight. It interferes with the adrenal glands which secrete adrenalin and cortisol. Imbalances of these hormones can cause cravings for refined carbohydrates and sugar, and fat deposition in the abdominal area. Poor sleep is also correlated with obesity. Sleep-deprived individuals have a deficiency of the hormone leptin which lets you know when you are full. That explains why you may feel hungrier after a period of time where you have had little sleep.

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Nutritional supplementation allows correction of any deficiencies and can help speed up metabolism. For example, individuals with low serotonin levels who are prone to depression and carbohydrate cravings may benefit from 5-HTP (a precursor to serotonin). Also, fiber supplements are often recommended to promote fullness and healthy bowel movements. As well, thyroid hormones are assessed and treated accordingly with nutrients to support thyroid function. There are many other nutritional supplements available for various conditions.