

THE YORK UNIVERSITY STAFF ASSOCIATION HEALTH AND WELLNESS NEWS AND VIEWS

Obesity is a multi-faceted complex medical condition. Obesity can be defined by the abnormal or excessive fat accumulation that presents serious risks to an individual's health. Obesity affects Canadians of all ethnic backgrounds, income, and education levels. On average, an adult male is considered overweight when his body weight exceeds the maximum desirable weight for his height (BMI) Body Mass Index and obese when his body weight is 20% plus over his healthy weight. A similar guideline can be used for women, but at a threshold of 25%.

Recent studies stated that one in four adult Canadians and one in 10 children are clinically obese. Therefore six million Canadians are living with obesity and require immediate support in managing and controlling their excess weight. Obesity is the leading cause of type 2 diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, arthritis and cancer. This condition impacts those who have obesity, their families, employers, neighbours, health practitioners and governments. One has to wonder how obesity got so out of control that we reached such a crisis? and more importantly, how do we stop it?

Many factors play a role in the development of obesity, making it a very complex health issue. At the most fundamental level, obesity results from an imbalance between caloric intake and usage. An energy imbalance in the body. Simply stated, we eat too much and exercise too little.

Obesity and its associated health problems have a significant economic impact. Studies state that obesity costs the Canadian economy somewhere between \$4.6-billion and \$7.1-billion a year. Those costs are split pretty evenly between direct health-care costs and indirect costs that relate to loss of income due to consistent welfare support, decreased productivity, restricted activity, absenteeism, and the income lost by premature death. Without societal changes, more and more Canadians will succumb to the medical complications of obesity.

There are countless weight-loss strategies available but many are ineffective and only last short-term, particularly for those who are morbidly obese. Among the morbidly obese, less than 5 percent will succeed in losing a significant amount of weight and maintaining the weight loss with non-surgical options. However people do lose weight without surgery, particularly

when they work with a certified health care professional to develop an effective and safe weight-loss program. Most programs combine positive reinforcement by encouraging/teaching good food choices, behavior modification therapy and exercise.

Regular exercise (and proper nutrition) can help reduce body fat as well as protect against chronic diseases associated with obesity. If you are looking for a reason to start an exercise program than look no further. In April 2010 YUSA began offering a FREE fitness program as well as nutritional advice to its members. We are so glad that the membership has embraced this opportunity to improve their overall health and working lives.

Well the factors that lead to overweight and obesity are numerous, complex and intertwined, it's a no-brainer that exercise burns calories. The more you exercise, the easier it is to keep your weight under control. For obese persons, the focus of the exercise program should be based on low-intensity aerobic activity with progressively increasing duration. Aerobic exercise provides overall health benefits, including fat loss, an increase in daily energy levels, and reduced risk of health problems. In addition to aerobic activity, resistance or weight training can also provide benefits to overall health. Not only does weight training make you stronger, but it also raises your muscle-to-fat ratio, which increases the amount of calories you burn at rest. A new Canadian study suggests that a combination of aerobic exercise and resistance training is the best way to win the battle with obesity. YUSA's fitness initiative offers a well rounded weekly workout program that incorporates fitness options for all fitness levels. YUSA also offers discounts to local Goodlife Fitness clubs through our Rewards Program.

The environment around us has changed, and if we hope to see diet and weight-related illness decrease, we will need to take control and change our environment.

For more information regarding YUSA's Fitness Program as well as our Rewards Program please contact Kerriane Brown at kerribr@yorku.ca

Kerriane Brown

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