

to your

Health!

"Promoting Good Health Through Information"

Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System • Patient Education Newsletter • Winter 2004

Obesity

Rosemary Gill, RN, MS & Eileen Stein, RD, MS, CDE

Are you concerned about your weight? If so, you are not alone. More than 60% of Americans are overweight or obese. The percentage of obese adults has nearly doubled in the past 20 years. Research from the National Institutes of Health tells us that the more overweight a person is, the more at risk he or she is for premature disability or death from diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, and cancer.

So, how do we define overweight these days? Gone are the old life insurance tables. They have been replaced by mathematical formulas. Each time you come into the clinic for a primary care appointment, a member of the nursing staff checks your height and weight. He or she then finds your numbers on a chart that gives Body Mass Index (BMI). BMI is a ratio of weight to height and is a strong indicator of a person's degree of body fat. A person with a BMI between 25 and 29.9 is considered overweight. Someone with a BMI of 30 or greater is defined as obese.

Waist measurement is also important. Abdominal fat that is out of proportion to total body fat puts people at increased risk for diseases associated with obesity. To check your risk, measure your waist circumference at home by using a tape measure around the smallest part of your waist, below the rib cage but above the belly button (not your

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Visit our new patient education website at <http://www.palo-alto.med.va.gov/patienteducation/patienteducation.htm>

Recipe for Health

FROSTED CAKE

Use skim milk and low fat cream cheese to lower the saturated fat and calories in this special-occasion cake.

Cake:

- 2 1/4 cups cake flour
- 2 1/4 tsp baking powder
- 4 tablespoons margarine
- 1 1/4 cups sugar
- 4 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 tablespoon orange peel
- 3/4 cup skim milk

Icing:

- 3 ounces low fat cream cheese
- 2 tablespoons skim milk
- 6 tablespoons cocoa
- 2 cups sifted confectioners sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

1. Preheat the oven to 325° F.
2. Grease with small amount of cooking oil or use non stick cooking oil spray on a 10-inch round pan (at least 2 1/2 inches high). Powder pan with flour.
3. Sift together flour and baking powder.
4. In a separate bowl, beat together margarine and sugar until soft and creamy.
5. Beat in eggs, vanilla, and orange peel.
6. Gradually add the flour mixture alternating with the milk, beginning and ending with flour.
7. Pour the mixture into the pan. Bake for 40 to 45 minutes or until done. Let cake cool for 5 to 10 minutes before removing from the pan. Let cool completely before icing.

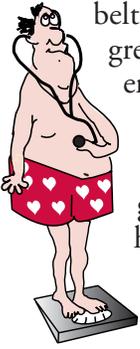
Icing:

1. Cream together cream cheese and milk until smooth. Add cocoa. Blend well.
2. Slowly add sugar until icing is smooth. Mix in vanilla.
3. Smooth icing over top and sides of cooled cake.

Makes 16 servings. Serving size: 1 slice. Each serving provides:

Calories: 241	Sodium: 273 mg
Total fat: 5 g	Calcium: 70 mg
Saturated fat: 2 g	Iron: 2 mg
Cholesterol: 57 mg	http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov

Obesity *(continued from page 1)*



beltline). Men who have a waist circumference of greater than 40 inches or women with a circumference of greater than 35 inches are at increased risk.

If you are overweight, this is a good time to start making a change. Drastic diets are usually not a good idea. The best approach is to adopt new habits that you can stick with for the long haul.

This means losing no more than 1-2 pounds a week. Even small amounts of weight loss can make an important difference in your health by helping to control your blood sugar or lowering your blood pressure. Here's what the Surgeon General recommends:

- Be physically active for at least 30 minutes most days of the week - this helps burn some of the calories you take in
- Keep TV viewing to no more than two hours a day
- Control your portions and make smart nutrition choices

Here are some tips for getting started:

- Start walking - do what you can and work up to 30 minutes a day. If you are already doing that, increase your activity to 45-60 minutes a day.
- Try to overcome your excuses for not exercising or being active. If it's too cold to walk outside, find a mall or some place you can walk indoors. Too busy? Get a

pedometer that counts your steps and aim for 10,000 steps every day. Can't walk? Find an exercise video, ride an exercise bicycle or try walking or swimming in the pool.

- Make a list of everything you eat for 3 days. Carefully look at the list and find one thing you can eliminate or cut down. If you have lost a pound at the end of the week, keep going. If you haven't, look at your list again and see what else you can trim. Some things to focus on: regular (non-diet) sodas, fruit juice, snack foods such as chips or crackers, and sweets (cookies, ice cream, pastries, or doughnuts).
- If there are certain foods you just can't give up, cut your portion size in 1/2 or have that item less frequently.
- Here is the website of the USDA Food and Nutrition Information Center. It has great information about food choices and portion sizes: <http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/dga/index.html>
- Some estimates for portion sizes: 1 serving of potatoes, rice or pasta is the size tennis ball or your fist; a bagel should be the size of a hockey puck; 1 serving of meat is about the size of a deck of cards.

You'll find that small changes can make a big difference if you stick to them. We're here to help. Ask your primary care provider, clinic nurse, dietitian, or pharmacist.

Get Ready to Quit Smoking!

Robert Hall, Ph.D.

There is always a benefit to quitting smoking – no matter how long you have been smoking. For example, a 65-year-old man will lose 4.4 years of life on average if he continues to smoke. If he can quit, on average he will get back 3.3 years of life. Notice that the increased life expectancy is “on average.” Some smokers who quit will gain less time and some will gain more.

Quality of life after quitting can improve as well. If a smoker has significant medical problems, like heart disease or lung disease, they often notice an increase in energy and find it easier to breathe within one or two weeks of quitting.

Sometimes smokers say, “Well, you have to die anyway.” Naturally that is true, but the issue is not about dying. The issue is about how and when you will die. If you smoke, you are more likely to die earlier from a long complicated illness. If you quit smoking, you may live longer with a better quality of life.

So what is the downside to quitting? If you quit smoking, you may be giving up something you enjoy. You may like the way nicotine gives you a lift. You may miss the means to relax with a cigarette. You may miss the taste and ritual that goes with smoking and talking with others who are smoking.

Take some time and consider what you like about smoking and what you don't like. Consider the risks of smoking and the benefits of quitting against what you enjoy about smoking. If you decide you would like to quit, give it a try. You can call any of these VA clinics for an appointment.

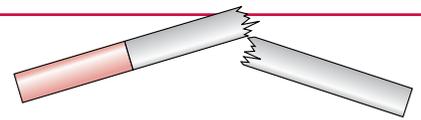
**Palo Alto/Menlo Park
Smoking Clinic**
(650) 493-5000 ext. 66594

Monterey Smoking Clinic
(831) 883-3800 ext. 43848

San Jose
(408) 363-3000 ext. 73037

Livermore
(650) 493-5000 ext 67915

Stockton
(209) 946-3400 ext. 35396
or ext. 35750





Physical Activity & Heart Disease Quiz



True or False.

1. The older you are, the less active you need to be.
2. It doesn't take a lot of money or expensive equipment to become physically fit.
3. You should consult a doctor before starting a physical activity program.
4. Exercise programs do not require a lot of time to be very effective.
5. To help stay physically active, include a variety of activities.

Answers.

1. False.

Although we tend to become less active with age, physical activity is still important. In fact, regular physical activity in older persons increases their capacity to do everyday activities. In general, middle-aged and older people benefit from regular physical activity just as young people do. What is important, at any age, is tailoring the activity program to your own fitness level.

2. True.

Many activities require little or no equipment. For example, brisk walking only requires a comfortable pair of walking shoes. Many communities offer free or inexpensive recreation facilities

and physical activity classes. Check shopping malls, as many of them are open early and late for people who do not wish to walk alone, in the dark, or in bad weather.

3. True.

You should ask your doctor before you start (or greatly increase) your physical activity if you have a medical condition such as high blood pressure, have pains or pressure in the chest and shoulder, feel dizzy or faint, get breathless after mild physical exertion, are middle-aged or older and have not been physically active, or plan a vigorous activity program. If none of these apply, start slow and get moving.

4. True.

It takes only a few minutes a day to become more physically active. If you don't have 30 minutes in your schedule for an exercise break, find two 15-minute periods or even three 10-minute periods. These exercise breaks will soon become a habit you can't live without.

5. True.

Pick several different activities that you like doing. You will be more likely to stay with it. Plan short-term and long-term goals. Keep a record of your progress, and check it regularly to see the progress you have made. Get your family and friends to join in. They can help keep you going.

From: NHLBI Obesity Education Initiative National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute US Department of Health and Human Services, NIH August 1996



Walk your Way to Health this Winter

Ernest Winkenwerder, MPT

If someone told you there was an easy exercise that required no special equipment or other expense and paid big dividends in both mental and physical health, would you be interested? If so, consider a walking program this winter.

Walking requires no special equipment other than a good comfortable pair of shoes with arch supports (many are built into a good walking or running shoe). Walking can be done at your convenience any hour of the day. In bad weather many people like to walk in malls that offer a variety of things to look at and people to see. You don't have to take any special classes - generally all people need to do is to gradually increase distance, pace and the number of days you walk.

Health benefits of walking are well documented. For instance, walking burns the same amount of calories per mile as running without jarring the body. When the feet leave the ground in a jog as much as three times your

body weight can be absorbed through the leg. Brisk walking one mile in 15 minutes burns about the same amount of calories as jogging the same distance in 8 1/2 minutes without this extra strain.

Recent studies show that after relatively vigorous exercise one's metabolism rate is increased above normal for some time. For many people, walking within 10 minutes after eating a meal helps convert those calories to energy and/or muscle rather than fat. A side benefit of walking after lunch is the energy you feel rather than that uncomfortable sleepy feeling after a noon meal.

Walking briskly for just 10 minutes can improve your mood. Also, in the winter when joints in the knees and other areas stiffen up, walking demonstrates the truth that "motion is lotion." Regular repetitive range of motion in walking can decrease swelling and pain and improve strength in patients with arthritis.

(Continued on back page.)

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VA MENLO PARK DIVISION

795 Willow Road
Menlo Park, CA 94025
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VA CAPITOLA OPC

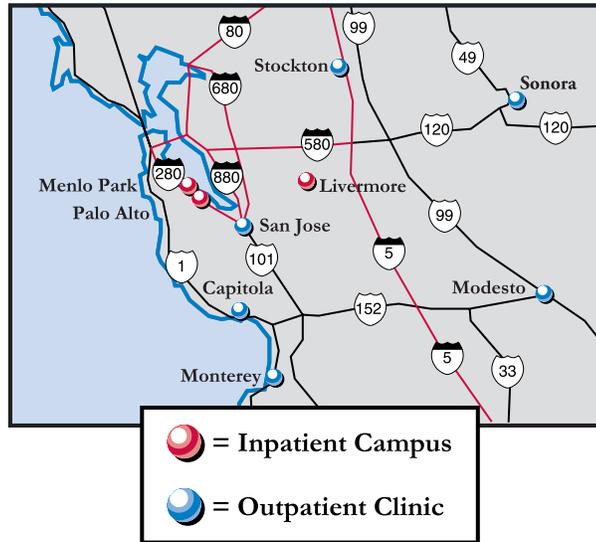
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VA STOCKTON OPC

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(209) 946-3400

World Wide Web Address:

www.palo-alto.med.va.gov



Walk your Way to Health this Winter *(continued from page 3)*

People with diabetes who walked two hours per week in one study had a 39% lower death rate than those who didn't. Another study of over 44,000 men found that those who walked at least 30 minutes per day had an 18% lower risk of being diagnosed with heart disease.

Questions or Comments?

If you have any questions or topics you would like addressed in *To Your Health* feel free to contact:

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So how to get started in the New Year? First, see how much you are walking now. In today's world with more people driving everywhere (even two blocks to the video store), working desk jobs or "relaxing" in their retirement, many people walk very little. Some people get a step counter to see how far they go each day. A reasonable goal would be to increase 2000 steps (one mile) per day. Other people may wish to start very lightly at a ten minute walk once or twice per day. Consult your provider if you have any health conditions, but usually a walking program at a moderate level can be done by most anyone. Stop if you develop any dizziness, pain, nausea or other unusual symptoms and let your provider know before continuing the program.

www.americaonthemove.org is a good website to track your progress and get discounts on step counters (not necessary, but a helpful motivation tool). Take the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports advice and walk- "the slower, surer way to fitness".

