



Weighing in on WEIGHT

By Michael Cheikin, MD

Weight weighs on our consciousness at regular times—after holidays, before summer vacations, when entering the dating scene, and sometimes when faced with health issues. As a society, we keep putting it on, adults and children, and collect statistics. However, the most important statistic is that 95% of those who lose weight will gain it back within 5 years. “Diet and exercise” are touted as the solution, and yet this method does not answer the question of why we gain weight as we age. As Atkins proved, it’s more complicated than just input and output of calories—there are different foods, metabolic factors, and a “set point” which seems to go up as we age.

Holistic medicine focuses on factors that often are ignored by conventional approaches, by identifying the different types of weight. Everyone knows of two of them: muscle and fat. Regarding fat, there are at least four types: structural, functional, abdominal, and dysfunctional. Structural fat is located at places that need padding or insulation, such as on the soles of our feet, around our kidneys, or surrounding our nerves (our brains are 80% fat). Functional fat is the “normal” fat that the body uses for storage, going back millions of years to when we evolved mechanisms to survive starvation. Abdominal fat is gaining huge attention since several hormones that it manufactures (such as leptin) have been linked to hunger and metabolism. So far attempts to understand and manipulate these hormones have proven elusive. Dysfunctional fat collects various places and is difficult to lose, like money locked away in a CD.

Improper dieting can cause the loss of structural fat and muscle and not “get” to the stored fat that we want to eliminate.

Other types of weight include water, stool and inflammatory weight. Water weight can be easily lost and gained, usually several pounds, but means nothing. Constipation, even if subtle, can not only contribute to weight but can cause a backup of toxins that block metabolism. “Inflammation” is a process that causes accumulation of fluids, and can occur deep in the gut and other places where it can contribute to weight and metabolic problems. Food allergies, such as to gluten (wheat), dairy and corn can stoke inflammation.

Biochemical imbalances, such as deficiencies of fish oils, chromium, magnesium, and toxins such as lead, mercury and pesticides (coming from the environment), even if exposure occurred decades earlier, can be a major factor contributing to weight loss resistance.

The adrenal and thyroid glands, especially in mid-life, have important roles in weight and metabolism. Conventional medicine does not recognize problems with these glands until the problems are extreme. Holistic medicine looks and treats for subtle, early “subclinical” problems which make weight loss or maintenance very difficult.

Quality sleep, gentle exercise, spiritual work, love, play and laughter are often neglected but in many are essential components of a multi-dimensional life plan that enables one to achieve optimal health and metabolism.

IMPORTANT NOTE: This general information should not be used to make decisions about medical care without the involvement of an experienced practitioner.

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Reading Materials (Books followed by ISBN number)

1. See Dr. Cheikin’s website, www.cheikin.com for related articles related articles on: Cortisol, Weight Loss Resistance and others.
2. Campbell, TC & Campbell TM: The China Study: The Most Comprehensive Study of Nutrition Ever Conducted and the Startling Implications for Diet, Weight Loss and Long-Term Health. Benbella Books, 2005. ISBN: 1932-100-385.
3. Sivananda Center: The Sivananda Companion to Yoga. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983. ISBN: 0684-87000-2.
4. Ballentine, Rudolph: Radical Healing: Integrating the World’s Greatest Therapeutic Traditions... Three Rivers Press, 2000. 0609-804-847
5. Moritz, Andreas: Timeless Secrets of Health and Rejuvenation. 2007. 9780-9792-75753

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