

SEVERE OBESITY CENTRE

# health & OBESITY

APRIL 2007 SUPPLEMENTARY ISSUE (NOT FOR SALE)

## KNOW YOUR RISKS

Health problems  
related to obesity

**PLUS!**

Weight loss  
options

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# What's Your BMI?

Are you concerned about your weight? The Body Mass Index (BMI) which calculates your height and weight gives you a general assessment of your total body fat, and is used to define the condition of overweight and obesity.

The Body Mass Index (BMI) is the best way to determine when excess body weight turns into a health risk. BMI takes into account your height and weight to gauge the amount of fat in your body.

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This publication is brought to you by  
SEVERE OBESITY CENTRE

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### Calculating your BMI

Here is the formula to calculate your BMI.

$$\text{BMI} = \frac{\text{Weight (kg)}}{\text{Height (m)} \times \text{Height (m)}}$$

### What does the result mean?

The healthy range for BMI is 18.5 - 22.0. Below are the classification of the results and the risk of co-morbidities.

Results	Classification	Risk of co-morbidities
Less than 18.5	Underweight	Low*
18.5 - 22.0	Normal range	Average
22.0 - 23.0	Overweight	
23.0 - 27.4	Pre-obese	Increased
27.5 - 34.9	Obese I	Moderate
35.0 - 39.9	Obese II	Severe
More than 40.0	Obese III	Very severe

\* but increased risk of other clinical problems

### What is your ideal body weight?

Height (cm)	"Ideal" Weight (kg)
145	42 - 52
147	44 - 54
150	45 - 56
152	46 - 58
155	48 - 60
157	50 - 62
160	51 - 64
162	53 - 66
165	55 - 68
167	57 - 70
170	58 - 72
172	60 - 74
175	62 - 76
177	64 - 79
180	66 - 81
182	67 - 83
185	69 - 85
187	71 - 87
190	73 - 90

Source: Severe Obesity Centre

# “More energetic, more alert, and looking forward to my next phase of life”

Devan, 41, has been battling obesity for about 15 years. He shares his journey through the years on the various weight loss methods he has tried, and his current motivation to keep the weight down.

For 15 years, Devan, a 41-year-old hotelier, has been trying many ways to lose weight. “I have tried dieting, exercising - by going to the gym, and seeing health practitioners on weight loss programs,” said Devan.

However, none of these were successful in his quest to keep off the weight. He admitted that one of the weight loss programs did work for a while. He experienced gradual weight loss for the first three months, but when his weight remained stagnant in the fourth and fifth month, he lost interest in the program.

“I resorted to my usual indulgence of good food,” confessed Devan. He enjoyed good food, attributing it to his mother who is a good cook and to his years of being in the food industry. “This time around, the weight gained was faster than before.”

By the end of 2006, Devan was really determined to lose weight. Besides wanting to improve his health, he is considering his future with his family. He and his wife are expecting their first child.

“I want to be able to do things with my family, I want to help my wife more, and I do not want obesity to be a hindrance,” said Devan. Being obese has its disadvantages, especially with physical mobility.

In Jan 2007, he underwent surgery at Severe Obesity Centre, one of the private hospital in Kuala Lumpur to lose his weight for good. At that time, his BMI was 54.8. Two months later, in his recent check-up at the doctor’s, his BMI was 46.

“Now, I feel more energetic, more alert and very much lighter,” said Devan, enthusiastically. “I am very happy with my decision to overcome obesity, and I am looking forward to the next phase of my life, which I hope will be much better.”

He aims to keep off the weight with healthier eating habits and exercise, viewing these measures as positive steps to stay healthy.

Having gone through all these, he encouraged people who are obese, especially those who are younger, to take positive steps to lose weight. Another point to consider on choosing a weight loss method is to go to the health professionals who have the facilities to guide you, he added.

**“I want to be able to do things with my family, I want to help my wife more, and I do not want obesity to be a hinderance,” said Devan.**

# Dangers of OBESITY

Obesity is not just about being overweight. Health experts define obesity as an excess of body fat. This excessive weight condition should not be merely treated lightly as a cosmetic problem. Scientific evidence has linked excessive weight to a number of debilitating and fatal diseases. Here are some known health risks of obesity.

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## Heart disease and stroke

Obesity has been long associated with heart disease, which is the leading cause of death in Malaysia.

A risk factor for coronary heart disease is high cholesterol. When too much LDL-cholesterol (commonly known as the 'bad' cholesterol) is in the blood, this leads to a build-up of cholesterol in the arteries.

The buildup of fatty deposits can result in a block in the blood vessel. When this happens in the heart, it is known as a heart attack. The disrupted blood flow causes the death of heart muscles. Likewise, when this happens in the brain, it is known as a stroke. The disrupted blood flow causes damage to the brain cells.

## Diabetes

Diabetes Type II and obesity have sometimes been dubbed as 'the twin disease', due to the fact that approximately eighty percent of people suffering from diabetes are also obese.

If you are obese, statistics show that you are five times more likely to develop diabetes than a person with average weight.

Do note that hypertension, stroke and heart disease are also very closely linked to diabetes.

## High blood pressure

High blood pressure stresses the heart because it has to pump more forcefully than normal to force blood into the arteries against the higher pressure.

## Obesity is a major risk factor for high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol and diabetes, all of which are associated with a greater incidence of suffering from a heart attack or stroke.

A person with a BMI of 30 and above is two times more likely to have high blood pressure.

### Cancer

Excess weight has been associated with an increased risk of certain types of cancers. These cancers include cancers of the colon, oesophagus and kidney, in both men and women.

In women, breast, ovarian, cervical and uterine cancer risk all increase with excess body weight. As for overweight postmenopausal women, they have a higher risk of developing breast cancer.

### Liver disease

Obesity is one of the culprits of creating a fatty liver. Too much fat in the liver can lead to inflammation of the liver, and resulting in multiple liver problems such as cirrhosis and liver damage.

### Gout

Gout is a form of arthritis characterised by a sharp pain and inflammation of a joint (especially the big toe), with swelling, warmth and redness around the affected area. This is due to increased level of uric acid in the body. Gout is strongly associated with obesity.

### Sleep Apnea

Many overweight people suffer from this condition, whereby breathing stops during sleep for 10 seconds or more, sometimes more than 300 times a night. As this affects a person's sleep quality, it can cause the person to experience sleepiness or fatigue during the day.

## Symptoms of obesity

### ■ Breathing problems

Excess bodily fat and abdominal contents push against the lungs, causing breathing difficulties.

### ■ Fatigue

People with obesity often experience fatigue. This may prevent them from participating fully in many daily activities.

### ■ Low back pain

As obesity places stress on bones and muscles, people with obesity are more likely to develop low back pain.

### ■ Osteoarthritis

Osteoarthritis is a joint disorder where the joint bone cartilage wears away. People with obesity have a higher risk of developing osteoarthritis of the hand, hip, back and knee.

### ■ Swollen feet and ankles

### ■ Excessive sweating

### Others

Other obesity-related medical conditions listed in the American Obesity Association website include rheumatoid arthritis, carpal tunnel syndrome, deep vein thrombosis, gallbladder disease, urinary stress incontinence, pancreatitis and infertility.

# Effective Ways to Manage Obesity

Obesity *can* be treated. The choice of treatment for obesity depends mainly on the person's degree of obesity and health condition. Among the short-term and long-term measures include lifestyle modifications, medication and surgery.

## Dietary changes

Dietary therapy involves making a long-term change to eating patterns, often with the help of a trained dietitian and nutritionist. To understand food intake better, study the food pyramid and learn what's in the food that you eat.

Be wary of fad diets that make promises that seem too good to be true. It is better to practise sensible and healthy eating.

## TIPS

### **Eat at least 5 servings of vegetables per day.**

Try new vegetables until you are eating at least 2 dozen different vegetables.

**Cut down on fats.** This include butter, margarine, shortening and trans fats. If you eat meat, opt for lean meats and skinless poultry.

## Increased physical activity

Due to the growing affluence, the rise of automation and hectic lifestyles, more people are leading increasingly sedentary lives, which is a contributing factor of obesity.

Physical activity is important for weight loss, so try to incorporate moderate amounts of physical activity and schedule regular exercise at least three times a week.

If you haven't exercised for a long time and want to start over, do visit your family doctor for a thorough medical check-up and get the green light to start exercising.

## TIPS

**Easy start.** Begin with activities that will help improve your stamina or cardiovascular fitness. Do start a light workout such as walking for 20 minutes three times a week.

**Create a schedule.** Most people do not have the discipline to exercise when there is no fixed schedule. Draw up a weekly timetable.

**Don't tax your body** right from the start by lifting heavy weights, exercising every single day of the week or exercising for long durations.

## Behavioural therapies

Behavioral therapy strategies for weight loss and maintenance include maintaining a diet diary to record down food intake and exercise patterns, identifying situations where a diet might be compromised (festive seasons, birthdays, having fatty snacks in the fridge) so that it can be avoided, and developing a social support network (telling friends and family about your weight goals, or seeking friends who have similar goals) and setting realistic weight loss goals.



### Medication

If you have tried cutting down on caloric intake and have exercised but to no avail, your doctor may prescribe weight loss drugs to treat obesity.

There are drugs that work by:

- suppressing your appetite
- reducing the absorption of fat by the body,
- increasing metabolic activity.

However, these prescribed drugs will only help if taken as part of a strict dietary programme. While taking the drugs, take note that it may have some unpleasant side effects.

### Surgical management

Surgical management is recommended for those with severe obesity (a BMI of 35 and above), who have tried other weight-loss methods but to no avail.

What does a surgical procedure involve? A stomach pouch, about the size of a human thumb, is created using a surgical stapler. This helps to decrease the volume of intake. Due to its sheer size, the pouch allows a small portion of food to be consumed at one time.

Another surgical procedure to further decrease absorption of calories involve creating an

intestinal bypass. To do this, the surgeon connects a section of the small intestine to the stomach pouch. With this new connection, food bypasses the lower portion of the stomach and the first part of the small intestine.

A combination of both procedures produces better results than a restrictive procedure alone. A person who underwent such procedures typically loses 50 to 70 percent of their excess weight. However, it is important to note that healthy lifestyle changes are required as a follow-up to surgery, to reduce weight in the long-term.

If you are thinking of surgical option, do talk to your doctor to find out if you are a suitable candidate for the procedure. As with all major surgical procedures, there are risks and complications involved. It is important to find out all aspects of the procedure.

## TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR

**Obesity is a medical problem. If you are obese, it is important to see a doctor who can advise you on treatment.**

Changing your eating habits is one of the ways to keep your weight down in the long-term.

# 10 Ways to Better Eating Habits



1

**Avoid eating large meals at least four hours before bedtime.**

Eating a heavy meal late at night can also cause indigestion, insomnia and promote obesity.

**Start the day with breakfast.**

Skipping breakfast makes you likely to eat more during lunch.

**Do not drink during meals.**

Instead, drink before or after eating.

4

**Avoid eating in front of the TV.**

You tend to eat more while watching TV as your mind is focused on the show than on the amount of food you eat.

**Chew your food properly.**

Savour every bite. Eating slowly helps to avoid overeating.

**Don't do diets.**

Temporary change will only provide temporary results.

7

**Eat sensible portions.**

It is the best way to stop unwanted weight gain.

**Do not use food as rewards.**

We are likely to binge more on 'comfort' foods like ice-cream, cakes and chocolate when eating emotionally.

**Make time for meals.**

Avoid eating on the run.

**Find healthy alternatives for snacks.**

Have a low-fat frozen yogurt instead of ice cream, fresh fruits instead of *keropok*.