

TO YOUR HEALTH

Carleton-Willard Out-Patient Clinic

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Why Are We Fat? Truth versus Mystery Revisited By Cherie Asgeirsson, RD, LDN

There is only one explanation for weight gain and the development of being over-weight or obese: that there are more calories being eaten than burned! So, if one eats fewer calories and burns calories through activity, would the opposite be true? There may be mysteries lurking that could complicate this!

Let's start with the indisputable facts:

- 1) There are 3,500 calories in one pound.
- 2) A calorie is a calorie no matter where it comes from.
- 3) Instead of having different intracellular systems for carbohydrates, protein, fat, and alcohol, they are all converted to glucose for quick energy or glycogen for long-term energy which is stored in the muscles and liver.

Weight is a very personal issue. This is another fact. It shapes how we feel about ourselves and how we treat others. Weight has a direct impact on our current and future health. Adding a few pounds here and there seems innocuous and gaining weight seems an inevitable part of aging, but in reality it is neither.

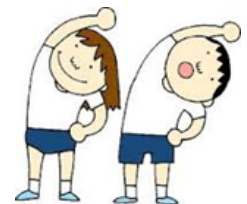
If overweight, the single most important thing you can do to reduce your risk of cancer is to lose weight! (It is not quitting smoking, or starting to exercise, or stop eating processed foods!) Do not be discouraged to think you have to lose a lot of weight to make a difference. A modest 5-10% loss of body weight may be enough to manage symptoms of a chronic disease. For many people that translates into 10-20 pounds! Start by thinking in terms of a



“healthy” weight instead of an “ideal” weight. The Body Mass Index or BMI is a measure of body mass and height that can be used to determine a healthy weight. A BMI of 18.5-24.9 is considered a normal weight; 25-30 is considered overweight; greater than 30 is considered obese.

Many blame themselves for being overweight, beating themselves up for not eating right or exercising enough and may have felt like failures for not staying on a diet. I would propose that many don't understand what humans really need to eat to live healthy lives. Our bodies are programmed to store fat up for times of famine and winter. In our world of abundance, a “food winter” and famine never come. To control one's weight and health in today's environment, one must understand what our bodies need to be healthy so we can modify our eating to lose weight or prevent weight gain.

Healthy eating cannot be separated from regular daily exercise for weight control.



When a person reduces their amount of exercise, muscle mass decreases and the body has reduced ability to burn calories. Muscles contain the powerhouses where the calories are burned. When you have fewer muscles you have decreased ability to burn calories. Many of you lament that you can no longer move as you did in earlier years. But, move the parts that can move! Consider, that as one ages the body needs fewer calories but needs the same amount of nutrients.

Dr. Walter Willett of Harvard School of Public Health has studied numerous diets. His summary is that (continued)



The bottom line is total calories, not where they come from. The fact is, our weight is a combination of what we eat, our genes, lifestyle, and culture. Genetic predisposition for one's weight and shape is well known. Genetic influences alone can not explain the rapid increase in obesity through the last 50 years. What else is at work?

Our culture is one of "living large" where indulgence is tolerated, even encouraged. Restaurants supersize portions, making sure you get your dollar-value. A meal eaten out can contain 1,500-2,000 calories — what many people need in one day!

Dr. Willett offers this simple advice as a three-pronged approach to weight control. 1) If you aren't physically active, get moving. If you are, try to increase the level of your activity. 2) Find an eating plan that works for you. 3) Become a "defensive eater" which includes the following strategies:

- ◆ Practice stopping eating before you are full
- ◆ Slow down at the meal
- ◆ Be selective in what you choose and what you serve your family and friends.
- ◆ Beware of calorie laden desserts
- ◆ Minimize your temptations by not purchasing calorie-rich, nutrient-empty foods
- ◆ Know how many calories you need and what you are eating
- ◆ Add more healthy "whole foods" to your intake
- ◆ Keep meals simple

Simplicity may be the best strategy. Simplicity runs counter to trends in the market place as the industry offers more beguiling varieties of foods. Lastly, consider these two points: when a food is

manufactured to be low fat or low sugar, what is taken out is often replaced with something else usually worse than what was removed. And, when someone chooses small portions at a meal, is this just to leave room for a high calorie dessert or appetizer? Why not, eat a full portion of the high quality entrée, grains and vegetables and not leave room for the "extras?"



Weight control is not impossible if it involves changing habits for a lifetime of healthy eating and daily movement. Challenge yourself to adopt the idea that you "eat to live" rather than "live to eat."

HEALTH EDUCATION LECTURE

On Tuesday, March 3, 2015.

Deb McNiven

**will present a health education talk on
"Five Components of Fitness".**

**The Fitness Staff invite you to learn how you
can make fitness a part of your everyday life.**

Please join us for this interactive lecture.

Auditorium Center

10:30 am — 11:30 am

New Dermatologist

Dr. Kathryn Bowers

Dr. Kathryn Bowers graduated from the University of Vermont and received her medical degree from the University of Vermont College of Medicine. She trained in dermatology at the University of Rochester, where she also served as the program's chief resident. Dr. Bowers practices at Dermatology Associates of Concord. Prior to joining this practice, she was a full-time academic dermatologist at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and Harvard Medical School. Dr. Bowers will be seeing residents in the Clinic on Fridays mornings by appointment only.

Please call the Clinic to schedule an appointment.