

Taking a Look at Obesity

As life is returning to normal and we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, it has forced us to reconsider so many facets of life. One of these is the light shone on the obesity epidemic. Whether, it is weight gain caused by the stress of daily life during an unprecedented time or the “new normal” of hybrid schedules, it is time for us to rethink obesity.

First, it is not just “weight gain”. We need to start calling it by its name: “Obesity”. Obesity is a disease, multifaceted and uncontrolled without the correct tools. When we start to look at obesity as a medical condition, not just a lifestyle choice, we can start to dissect the individual problems and treat them accordingly. Obesity is defined as a BMI (Body Mass Index) of 30 or higher and is the result of a complex interplay between many factors including: environment, diet and portion size, emotional and psychological factors, inactive lifestyle and genetics. Obesity is associated with over 200 co-morbidities; including Type 2 Diabetes, Hypertension, Musculoskeletal Complications, Sleep Apnea and Coronary Artery Disease.

The good news is even a 5% weight loss can have a positive impact on health. And there's more than one treatment option. Keep in mind, it's normal to try many approaches on the path to long-term weight management.

Treatment Options Include:

- **Healthy eating and portion control**
Healthy meal planning and smaller portions create an energy deficit (think fewer calories in) while providing the right nutrients for you.
- **Environmental changes**
You can make small changes to your surroundings, such as clearing out high-calorie snacks in your kitchen, or keeping your activity gear near the front door, that may help you stay on track with your weight-management goals.
- **Behavioral approaches**
Working with an expert in behavior modification, such as a counselor or a nutritionist, may help you find ways to build new habits that fit into your lifestyle. Small changes, like reducing sugary drinks or making time to be active a few times a week, can really help.
- **Physical activity**
Physical activity helps you burn calories. The more active your lifestyle, the more calories you'll burn.
- **Medicine**
The FDA has approved several prescription medicines for weight loss and weight management. You can discuss the possible benefits and risks with a health care provider.
- **Surgical procedures**
Bariatric surgery is usually an option for individuals with a body mass index (BMI) of 35 or higher along with weight-related conditions. There are different types of bariatric surgical procedures that cause weight loss by reducing how much food the stomach can hold. You can discuss the possible benefits and risks with a health care provider.
- **Managing other health conditions**
Talk to a health care provider about how to stay on top of other conditions you may have. Some health conditions may have an impact on your weight.

It is never too early to focus on health through weight. Joint Council 40 recognizes the importance of access to safe and effective medical treatment for our members.

There are several ways to get help.

- Dietary Counseling
- Behavioral Counseling
- Anti-obesity medications with prior authorization
- Bariatric Surgery
- Wellness Initiatives

Start today by talking with your health care provider to decide which option is best for you.