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• **OBESITY IN ADOLESCENTS.**

Obesity can be a serious medical condition of difficult management in a teenager; it includes several aspects all equally important: diet, daily physical activity and psychological support.

The prime objectives of medical management at this age are:

- a) Maintain normal growth pattern.
- b) Allow height to catch weight.
- c) Finally, favor a 5-10% weight loss and then maintain weight control.

1) EXERCISE:

- i) A minimum of 30 - 60 minutes per day, a daily practice of an agreeable and enjoyable physical activity for the teenager: biking, walking, jogging, ice skating, roller skating, dancing, swimming, practicing a particular sport, or a particular aerobics routine.
- ii) Restrict TV time to 1 hour per day / Do not have TV in patient's room / Do not watch TV while eating / Do not use remote while watching TV.
- iii) Eliminate altogether sweetened drinks and discontinue sodas and soft drinks altogether.
- iv) Restrict sedentary attitudes and parents should become role models for proper eating habits and exercise routines.

2) DIET:

- i) Maintain a basic daily caloric requirement of 2000 calories/day: nothing between meals except water, raw vegetables and non-caloric drinks.
- ii) Supplement calcium 1200 mg/day.
- iii) Supplement with iron, multivitamins (Vitamins A, C, B1, B2 & B3).
- iv) Promote a daily intake of abundant fiber - rich vegetables.
- v) Restrict fats to 30%, carbohydrates to 50%, protein 20%, and cholesterol to 300 mg/day.
- vi) Mom dishes up meals with NO seconds; give only $\frac{1}{2}$ dessert serving.
- vii) NO food after dinner.

How to achieve this goal?

- i) Allow for heavy meals only at natural scheduled mealtimes: breakfast, lunch and dinner. If possible, make dinner even lighter.
- ii) Between meals, the only foods allowed are non-caloric drinks and raw vegetables, complete restriction of snacks and junk food is mandatory.
- iii) Cooking oil must be ONLY Extra Virgin olive oil. A good butter substitute is: Smart Balance Spread.
- iv) Milk intake should be only skim milk 1% or 2 %. Whole milk is absolutely prohibited. A good cheese substitute is Alpine Lace Swiss cheese.
- v) Egg substitute: Egg beaters.
- vi) White meats are preferred over red meats; always choose skinless and lean cuts. Red meats should be restricted to ONCE A MONTH.
- vii) Sugar substitute: Splenda.
- viii) Mediterranean diet is BEST diet: lean meats, oily fish like salmon and tuna twice weekly, olive oil, salads, avocado, and whole grain products such as whole wheat bread, brown rice and whole grain pasta; ABSOLUTELY NO white food products such as white rice, white bread, white pasta and potatoes.

3) PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT:

- i) Teach as you do not as you say, in other words teach healthy feeding habits by keeping a healthy diet yourself.
- ii) Request support from the school personnel to watch for a healthy diet for your children.
- iii) Do not use appetite suppressants or dieting pills.
- iv) Refer to the nutritionist when everything else fails.

Reference: "Nutrition Guidelines", American Academy of Pediatrics, 2004.