

Health In Progress

Lesson 23

Dieting and Obesity



QUESTION 23:

The best way to keep from being overweight or to try to lose weight if you are already overweight is:

- a. Skip meals, especially breakfast
- b. Eat healthy foods and be physically active every day
- c. Just go on a diet

ANSWER: b. Eat healthy foods and be physically active every day

1. The term "obesity epidemic" refers to the increasing numbers of overweight and very overweight (obese) children and adults in the United States as well as in many other parts of the world. For example, in the U.S. from 1963-1970, the number of obese children between 2-19 years of age was less than 5 out of 100. According to the Institute of Medicine, the current rates of obesity in children are:
 - 2 to 5-year-olds: 10 out of 100
 - 6 to 11-year-olds: 15 out of 100
 - 12 to 19-year-olds: 16 out of 100
2. Most experts agree there are some people who are born with a tendency to gain weight more easily. On the other hand, these same experts have concluded that the current "obesity epidemic" has been fueled by "an energy imbalance—a difference between the calories taken in and the calories expended".* In other words, kids are either eating too much *or* are too inactive *or* both.
3. It is hard to lose weight once you have gained it; talk to anyone who has tried to do so. It is not easy. That is why it is best to prevent obesity by eating healthy foods and moving enough each day, *through normal activities and enjoyable exercise*, to burn off what you eat.

A recent study showed that irregular meal patterns, and skipping breakfast, often results in increased caloric intake!**

4. Why is it important not to become overweight? The main reason is that overweight people are at higher risk of developing several **medical and psychological complications**. These complications can result in disability, expense, shortened lifespan and lower quality of life. Overweight people may develop lowered self-esteem and, later on in life, experience any of the following: decreased expectations of happiness, withdrawal, depression, decreased education or income. *It is important to approach overweight persons as you would anybody, and support them in their efforts--should they be motivated--to be fit and have a healthy weight.*

*Basco, Jr, WT. Obesity and the metabolic syndrome. Available at: http://www.medscape.com/viewprogram/4301_pnt.

**Nelson, ME. Strong Women Newsletter #78, March 2005. Available at: <http://www.strongwomen.com>.