

Battling Obesity

Strategies from the Queens Long Island Medical Group

Obesity is a serious and growing problem in the U.S., and is considered a chronic disease that is on the rise. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated that about six out of 10 Americans, including one out of five children, are either overweight or obese. Furthermore, the prevalence of obesity almost doubled from about 15% in 1980 to 27% in 1999.

Being overweight or obese increases the risk of many diseases and health conditions, including hypertension, high cholesterol, type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, stroke, gall-bladder disease, osteoarthritis, sleep apnea and respiratory problems as well as some cancers (endometrial, breast and colon).

According to Dr. Julie Patel-Pannullo, co-medical director of the Queens Long Island Medical Group, Jamaica Estates office, "Currently the most effective treatment methods for obesity combine nutritional education with diet and exercise. In addition, we recommend counseling with behavioral strategies. The aim is to help our patients acquire the skills and supports necessary to change their eating patterns and become physically active."

Some additional tips that may be helpful in battling obesity:

- Slowly chewing your food well, which helps you feel satisfied with less food.
- Think portion control. Familiarize

yourself with appropriate serving sizes and measure and weigh foods accordingly.

- Keep a record of when you eat, what you eat and how much. This will help you spot situations in which you tend to overeat.
- Never skip meals, especially breakfast.

You will just be hungrier and more likely to

overeat at the next meal.

- You can also reduce your appetite by drinking at least one glass of water 30 minutes before each meal.

Dr. Patel-Pannullo notes that "a number of drugs have been approved for weight loss by the Food and Drug Administration. These drugs can produce modest weight loss, which can be sustained for at least two years if the medication is continued. However, the adverse effects of these medications are not tolerated by all. We recommend that pharmacological treatment of obesity be used only as part of a comprehensive program to treat obesity.

"As a last resort surgical interventions such as gastric bypass or banding are available," she continues. "These procedures carry high risks and are reserved for morbidly obese patients with comorbidities such as diabetes and hypertension and have failed all other treatment options."

In order to assess your weight relative to your height, the Body Mass Index (BMI) is used by many primary care providers to identify obesity. The greater your BMI, the higher your risk of developing health problems related to excess weight. To calculate your body mass index, multiply your weight in pounds by 703, then divide by your height in inches and finally divide this by your height in inches again.

Obesity is the second leading cause of preventable deaths in the U.S. (tobacco is the first). If you or anyone you know suffers from obesity, ask them to seek help from a physician.

Come visit the Queens Long Island Medical Group for all of your health care needs. For more information, log on to www.QLILMG.com or call 1-877-750-QLMG (757-5464).