

Decoding obesity: The lifestyle disease

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If you thought obesity is a mere lifestyle disorder, think again. The fact that there is a billion dollar industry thriving globally to prevent excessive weight-gain and obesity, says a lot, does it not? A few years ago, obesity was officially recognised and classified as a multifactorial disease, for the first time. It is not a disease to be taken lightly, rather, it needs to be managed medically with appropriate treatment and expert supervision. One needs to keep in mind that merely losing weight and actually managing obesity are two completely different things altogether. We spoke to obesity surgeon Dr Sanjay Borude, endocrinologist and obesity consultant Dr Deepak Chaturvedi and bariatric, metabolic surgeon Dr Ramen Goel, for busting myths about this lifestyle disease...

MYTH: Surgeries are dangerous when one is obese

FACT: Laparoscopy or key hole surgeries are the biggest boon to surgery, when it comes to morbidly obese patients. Bariatric surgeries help reduce and maintain weight loss by way of restriction of the intake of solids and normalising the hormonal status.

MYTH: There is weight regain after any obesity surgery

FACT: Obesity surgery helps reduce excess weight which is otherwise very difficult to lose. Once achieved, one has to follow a strict lifestyle pattern with adequate diet, exercise and rest to avoid regaining weight.

MYTH: Heredity and food habits are the only causes for obesity

FACT: Other than heredity and lifestyle, the other cause is endocrine hormonal changes. But it gives more of the water retention.

MYTH: Obesity is merely a lifestyle disorder

FACT: Obesity has now been classified as disease with multi factorial etiology. Being a disease, obesity needs to be managed medically under supervision.

MYTH: Obesity always means low thyroid. Taking thyroid medicines will treat it

FACT: Not all the obesity is due to hypothyroidism. Also, only hypothyroidism can not be labelled as the sole cause of obesity in any individual. Taking unsupervised and inadvertent thyroid supplementation may lead to detrimental health effects. Obesity indeed has underlying endocrine (hormonal) issues as the cause and complications effect. The assessment should not restrict to thyroid only.

Emphasis on exercise for weight loss could result in fatigue and muscle injury. Too much exercise might lead to frustration or depression when expected results are not achieved



MYTH: Exercise solves obesity problems

Fact: A lot of people even medical practitioners believe that obesity runs in family because no one runs in family scientifically true? No. Emphasis on exercise for weight loss in obesity, could result in fatigue and muscle injury besides frustration or depression. Expected results are not achieved most. Losing weight and managing obesity are two different entities. Exercise is a good habit to acquire irrespective of the weight. It gives fitness and helps manage weight. The management of obesity and its complications need a multimodal approach (including medical management, dietetics, exercise, psychological management and life style management).

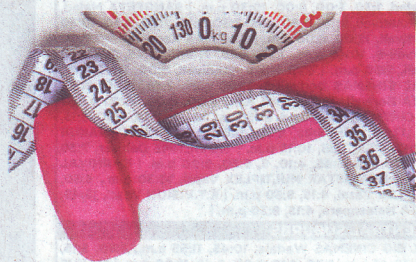


MYTH: OTP slimming alternatives and fat burners can help

Fact: The fancy over-the-counter (OTP) alternative (herbal) medicines, ayurvedic massages, and well-marketed equipment cannot treat obesity. Obesity is a multi-factorial disease, a modern epidemic and it needs a multimodal and serious approach to management. There is nothing like fat burners. These products by increasing sympathetic over-activity can lead to serious cardiac side effects (including death).

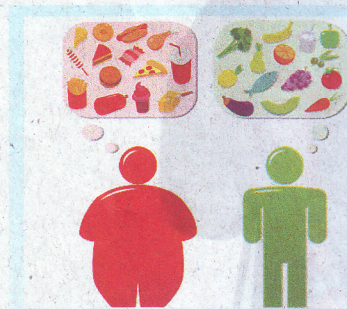
MYTH: Eating less is the answer for weight loss.

Fact: The truth is that even reduced food intake by 10%-20% may continue to result in weight gain. Everyone knows that weight loss only happens if person is consuming less than the daily expense. It is essential to assess the daily calorie expenditure to calculate the calorie requirement. In many hi-calorie eaters this may result in calorie reduction of 2,000-3,000 calories per day to achieve a deficit diet.



MYTH: Diet and exercise can treat any obesity.

Fact: The mainstay of the mild to moderate obesity is supervised diet and exercise. Obesity surgery will be the mainstay for morbid obesity with or without medical issues.



MYTH: Non-vegetarian diet causes obesity

Fact: Vegetarian diet is healthy but lacks a lot of proteins, minerals and trace elements. Flesh proteins in non-vegetarian diet is best accepted by human body.