

March is National Nutrition Month

By Pam Mason, Registered Dietitian, Mammoth Hospital

The weight loss industry in the United States is a huge multi-million dollar market. Since the 1960's, Americans have been obsessed with weight loss and being thin. Actresses are looked to as the standard for a healthy and beautiful weight. Unfortunately, many of the women of Hollywood are so thin they meet the guidelines for anorexia and are unhealthy role models.



Even with this fascination for thinness, the average adult's weight continues to rise. Overweight and obesity have grown to epidemic proportions. The risk of developing multiple chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke and cancer increases when a person is overweight. The greater a person's weight is over the normal weight range, the greater the person's risk for developing a chronic disease.

One tool to evaluate your health risk according to weight is the Body Mass Index (BMI). BMI levels have been determined through a study of weight in relation to disease risk. BMI is not a diagnostic tool, but it does assess your risk for developing chronic diseases according to weight. To assess your health risk related to weight, go to <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/bmi> and calculate your BMI.

A person at risk for developing a chronic disease can significantly decrease their risk by losing just 10% of their body weight. The best way to achieve long-term weight loss is to adopt a balanced diet and regular physical activity. People who try commercial diets tend to regain the lost weight once they return to eating normal foods because they have not learned healthy eating principles to sustain their weight loss.

If you would like to start making a change in your weight to maximize your health there are safe weight management options available. Education is critical in understanding how to consume a healthy diet. If you choose to try a program to help you lose weight, you need to find a program that will take the time to teach you how to make healthy food choices and support you in the process of integrating healthy eating into your diet. The program must also recognize and promote diet and physical activity as a part of the weight loss process.

Watch out for fad diets and weight loss gimmicks. When a diet or pill claims to be able to help you "lose the weight while eating what you want," or "lose the weight without exercise," you should be skeptical. Weight loss or weight gain comes down to one principle. If you eat more calories than you burn you will gain weight. If you burn more calories than you eat you will lose weight. Don't let your wallet fall victim to the hype.

Mammoth Hospital is now offering a weight management program to help people attain their weight loss needs. The program provides education and support by an exercise physiologist and registered dietitian. The Hospital will also be hosting several community classes on various nutrition related topics from learning to read a food label to diet principles for diabetes management. Private counseling sessions can also be scheduled for dietary management of multiple conditions. Talk to your doctor today if you think you may benefit from speaking with a registered dietitian or contact Pam Mason, R.D. for Mammoth Hospital at (760) 924-4214.