

# A Broader Approach To Obesity

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**O**verwhelmingly, research studies are delivering staggering statistics: approximately two-thirds of the American population is overweight, and nearly half of those folks are obese.

The causes of obesity are assumed to be well known: too much food and too little exercise. As healthcare professionals, we have an obligation to help our patients by educating them on the right course of action to reverse the trend. We also have an opportunity to move past the generic recommendation of “exercise and eat right.” We must challenge ourselves to explain what constitutes good nutrition and effective exercise for this population.

We recommend a three-pronged approach for our obese patients. It tackles the key areas that often combine to produce failure. Our goal as healthcare professionals is to enable our patients to be successful in their weight loss goals. The three components include:

1. Identify what constitutes good/proper nutrition.
2. Incorporate a realistic strength training program that doesn't overwhelm or over-complicate.
3. Educate patients on up-to-date research that sheds the truth on salt, sugar (especially fructose), and saturated fats.

While lack of exercise is constantly cited as a major cause of obesity, the facts do not support this sweeping generalization. We have come to realize that the majority of people who rely on exercise to lose weight are extremely frustrated with the results.

Numerous studies over the last three decades show that exercise, in general, is not particularly effective at reducing fat stores. We know people who spend a lot of time in the gym, on the treadmill or stair stepper, who never see any lasting benefits. We also all know people who have lost weight on an effective eating plan without exercise.

The healthcare system's bland and undocumented recommendation to be “active” is a simplistic and ineffective approach to obesity. So, what can we offer our patients as a realistic “single-pronged” approach to better health and fitness?

We need to tell our patients that the most essential part of a weight loss program is maintaining glycemic control or maintaining normal blood sugar and brain sugar levels. We need to explain that clearly by impressing the fact that reducing the consumption of refined starches and sugars—especially fructose—will result in weight loss and lower blood pressure, both of which will reduce the likelihood of diabetes.



## The fructose phenomenon

There is compelling new evidence linking fructose consumption to increased uric acid levels, which is intricately linked to obesity and associated health problems such as diabetes and hypertension. Fructose is the most pernicious type of sugar. It contributes to glycation, a pathological aging process, more than any other sugar. The oxidative damage caused by glycation, and its cascading effect on the tissues of the vascular system, renal capillaries (kidneys), joints, retinal capillaries, and the skin (wrinkles), will surely grab our patients' attention.

Dr. Mehmet Oz and others proclaim that Americans should add more fruit to their diets. The blanket statement that fruit is always an acceptable part of the diet does not hold true for those with a problem regulating blood sugars. Fructose content is particularly high in some fruits, such as raisins, grapes, prunes, plums, figs, dates, cherries, pears, bananas, berries, apples, and watermelon, as well as honey, ordinary sugar, and corn syrup. Is that to say no one should eat fruit? Of course not. Everyone has an individual tolerance for fruit.

For those who proudly claim they are juicers, the concentration of fructose is even higher than in whole fruit. There is nothing natural about consuming large quantities of juice. You may have heard or know someone who has lost weight juicing. More than likely, the weight loss was a result of a dramatic reduction in the total amount of sugars and carbohydrates they were consuming before juicing.

## The skinny on fat

At the other end of the nutritional spectrum, educating patients on the importance of fats, especially saturated fats, is often more challenging.