



FAMILY GUARDIAN

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FAMILY GUARDIAN'S BAHAMAHEALTH DIVISION TACKLING "WEIGHTY" SUBJECT

Each Saturday morning, beginning at 6:30 a.m., hundreds of Family Guardian's BahamaHealth members meet to weigh-in, walk, and listen to an impressive array of experts in health, nutrition and exercise, all with a view to improving their general health and perhaps being named the grand-prize winner in the 6-Week Slim-Down Challenge. The unique health initiative got underway on September 16 and continues through October 28.

Dr. Kirtland Culmer, BahamaHealth's medical director, recently addressed participants on the risk factors associated with obesity and the treatment options for weight loss.

"Obesity is one of the major risk factors for short life and sudden death, and it is associated with other serious risk factors such as hypertension, hypercholesterolemia and diabetes mellitus.

In order to understand how the various levels of treatment are assessed, everyone should obtain a Body Mass Index (BMI) table from his health care provider. This table is based on the height and weight of the individual, and is a great tool for deciding the extent of the problem of obesity.

The need for treatment varies according to the magnitude of obesity as indicated by the BMI as follows:

Overweight (mild obesity): BMI 25 to 30

Usually no treatment is indicated unless there is obesity around the belly; Metabolic Syndrome (belly fat, blood fat disorders, high blood pressure, diabetes, etc.) or type 2 diabetes require medical intervention and overweight children should always be treated.

Moderate Obesity: BMI 30 to 35

A young obese person should be treated. The treatment of middle-aged persons in this category should be decided individually according to the available resources. Treatment should always be given if the person has diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol or other associated diseases.

Severe Obesity: BMI greater than 35

This must always be treated.

The first or basic treatment consists of gradual and permanent change in living habits. The individual must have the desire to become healthy and act upon it. If the basic treatment has been unsuccessful, it should be combined with a very low-calorie diet. This is useful in moderate obesity especially if there is a strong indication for reducing weight, i.e. when there are associated diseases present. This combination is especially recommended in severe obesity.

I try to dissuade my patients from using drugs as a treatment. Side effects and sometimes addiction are some of the risks involved. Drugs should only be tried if all else fails and intensive lifestyle counseling should be available. If after three to four months no significant weight loss is obtained, the drugs should be discontinued. Drugs should not be substituted for good, low calorie nutrition.

Surgical treatment should only be considered as a last resort in a person with severe or morbid obesity, and the candidates should be selected very carefully.

If you are not having success by yourself, join a group that has as its goal the idea of good nutrition and permanent weight loss. Avoid the quick fix, dangerous approach to losing weight. Keep the weight reduction steady and consistent, not up and down. Measure what you are doing. Aim at a **permanent** result.

Try to learn as much as you can about weight and calories. Seek counseling from your doctor, dietitian or bona fide weight counselor. Find out the calorie content of meals so that you can reduce them intelligently. The main emphasis should be on the reduction of fat intake.

The amount of exercise you should do depends on the degree of obesity and the present condition of your health. Always get advice from your doctor. And, remember the slogan, **do more, eat less.**"

(photo provided below)



BahamaHealth's medical director Dr. Kirtland Culmer is one of a number of health experts addressing the weekly gathering of participants at the 6-Week Slim-Down Challenge. Hundreds of BahamaHealth members meet every Saturday morning to enjoy the educational, supportive programme designed to improve lifestyle and dietary habits for weight loss and long-term good health.
