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So What Can I Eat?

A Canadian review of eight studies with more than 60,000 people is suggesting that there is no such thing as “healthy” obesity. Obesity is defined as a Body Mass Index of greater than 30 and it was thought that “metabolically healthy” obese people were at a relatively low risk of health complications. However, this recent review showed that, while the risk for metabolically “healthy” people is lower than metabolically “unhealthy” obese people, there is still four times the risk of diabetes and heart disease. There is no benign obesity.

Grains, or more specifically those containing gluten, have become the latest food group to be shunned by would-be weight losers. Unfortunately, this is an idea that may backfire. Whole grains are an essential part of the diet, providing specific nutrients and fibre in addition to energy. The real culprit in the near-epidemic rates of weight gain, diabetes and heart disease is the transition to a diet heavy in animal products plus added fats and sugars. Put your efforts where they matter!

Reduce the Sugar in Your Diet

The World Health Organization is proposing to update its recommendations that our diet provide no more than five percent of its calories from “free sugars.” This would be down from the previous level of ten percent. Free sugars are defined as added sugars, honey, syrups and fruit juices/concentrates, but not whole fruit or milk. Five percent translates to less than two tablespoons per day – total. The rationale is that this new level would significantly lower obesity levels and dental cavities.

One way to limit your consumption of sugars and better manage blood sugar levels is to follow a low-glycemic diet. Focus on non-starchy vegetables and fruit instead of processed and baked goods. Consume whole grains and aim for low-fat proteins such as fish, beans and skinless chicken. Don’t skip breakfast and ensure you are eating three meals a day plus one to two snacks, and, eliminate sweetened drinks.

Losing and managing weight can seem like a struggle – but it is easier if you focus on what you CAN have instead of what you shouldn’t have. Eating foods that have minimal processing and no added sweetness is key. For more tips, talk to your pharmacist.