

Best Practice Prevention and Management of Unintended Weight Gain

Obesity and unintended weight gain are serious conditions that often complicate chronic health problems among the elderly. The prevalence of obesity in older adults has increased in the past 20 years, increasing the risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, several cancers, as well as increasing the risk of physical and cognitive disability. Unintended weight gain may be linked to a number of conditions:

- Comorbid disease process: cardiovascular disease, diabetes
- Medications
- Body mass index (BMI): (25 to 29.9 kg/m² is overweight, 30 kg/m² or more is obese)
- Waist circumference: Abdominal fat is clinically defined as 40 inches or more in men and 35 inches or more in women. This is a better indicator of medical risk in people who are elderly.

Intentional weight loss in people who are elderly who are obese has not been advocated by health care providers because of the uncertainty if the benefits outweigh the risks. Thirty percent of people in nursing facilities with a BMI >35 are younger than 65. The focus with people under 65 years of age is to reduce medical complications such as diabetes, heart disease, sleep apnea, etc.

Assessment

- Identify risk factors that contribute to weight gain
 - medications: Insulin, tricyclic antidepressants, antipsychotics, anticonvulsants;
 - functional impairment,
 - edema,
 - excessive caloric intake,
 - physical inactivity
- Identify degree of weight gain (> 30 BMI = obesity)
- Identify risks and benefits of weight management

Best Practice Prevention and Management of Unintended Weight Gain

Risks	Benefits
1. Decrease in nutritional intake	1. Improve weight range to desirable level (< 30 BMI)
2. Decrease in muscle mass and bone density	2. Improve medical complications if <75 years old (Quantity of life)
3. Decrease in pleasure of eating	3. Improve functioning and mobility for all ages (Quality of life)

- Assess person's readiness/consent to change
- Registered Dietitian's (RD) annual assessment of nutrition and fluid needs
- RD's planned person-specific nutrition related goal(s)

Care Plan

- Person-centered, reasonable, measurable goals that do not contribute to nutritional risk
- Individualized interventions
- Utilization of the RD's assessments, nutrition goals, and recommendations
- Utilization of an interdisciplinary approach

Care

Dietary Recommendations

- Reduce calories by 500 kcals/day
- Increase protein to 1.0 g/kg of body weight
- Provide a multiple vitamin-mineral supplement

Exercise Recommendations

- Provide 10-20 minutes of resident appropriate exercise at least every other day.

Best Practice Prevention and Management of Unintended Weight Gain

Weight Monitoring

- Establish a baseline--weigh weekly until goal is reached
- Weigh the same time of day
- Weigh using the same scale
- Record weights to easily assess trends
- Notify MD and RD of significant weight changes to plan

Resources

- [Body mass index](#)
- [Waist Circumference and Medical Risk](#)
- [Unintended Weight Gain Care Plan](#)
- [Resource List for Increasing Physical Activity](#)
- [Best Practice Management of Unintended Weight Gain](#)
- [Best Practice Management of Intended Weight Loss](#)