

Empowering Change in Women's Health Journey Confronting Obesity

Sachin M. Pandit¹, Jayant D. Chaudhari²

^{1,2}Department of English Literature, Government Vidarbha Institute of Science and Humanities,
Amravati-444 604, MS, India

ABSTRACT

Obesity is a complex, neurobehavioral, chronic, progressive, relapsing illness that is curable. According to the WHO, 15% of women are obese, which has long-term health effects. Obesity care should prioritize health outcomes over weight loss. Common, culturally sensitive, trauma-informed terminology is needed when discussing obesity. Pregnancy causes profound physiological changes. Obese parents can improve their nursing and fertility with clinical contacts before, during, and after childbirth. Recognition and treatment of pre-existing conditions are possible. Obese women are more prone to develop gastrointestinal, hepatic, renal, venous thromboembolism, and sleep apnea, in addition to pregnancy. Obese women must be tested for reproductive and gynaecological disorders and take into consideration their higher risk of cancer. Depression must be diagnosed and treated. Due to this complicated condition, obesity is rising and public health programs have failed to reduce it. Interdisciplinary healthcare and effective health enhancement medicines should be the focus of future research.

Keywords: Obesity; Pregnancy; Depression; Weight Loss.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the realm of health of women, the battle against obesity stands as a significant challenge and a poignant narrative of empowerment (Gates, 2019). It is a journey that transcends mere numbers on a scale, delving into the intricate relationship between physical well-being, mental resilience, and societal influences (Plough, 2020). Empowering change in the context of obesity is not just about shedding pounds; it is about reclaiming agency over one's health, embracing self-care, and fostering a supportive environment that nurtures holistic well-being (Iafrate, 2018). This journey is multifaceted, weaving through personal narratives, medical insights, societal norms, and cultural perceptions. It is a narrative of triumphs and setbacks, of determination in the face of obstacles, and of the collective effort to redefine standards of beauty, health, and self-worth (Lewis, 2024).

Obesity is a global health challenge, and its impact on women is particularly significant. Beyond its physical effects, obesity can affect mental well-being, self-esteem, and overall quality of life (Lewis, 2024; Taylor et al., 2013). Overcoming obesity is not just about losing weight; it's a journey toward reclaiming health, confidence, and vitality (Frank Lipman, 2017). In this guide, we delve into practical strategies, evidence-based insights, and empowering perspectives tailored specifically for women on their path to overcoming obesity (Frates & Faries, 2023). Addressing obesity requires a comprehensive approach that considers individual needs, lifestyle factors, societal influences, and medical guidance (Huang et al., 2009). Through a combination of nutrition, physical activity, behavioural

changes, and support systems, women can navigate this journey with resilience and determination (Story et al., 2009) (Fig. 1).

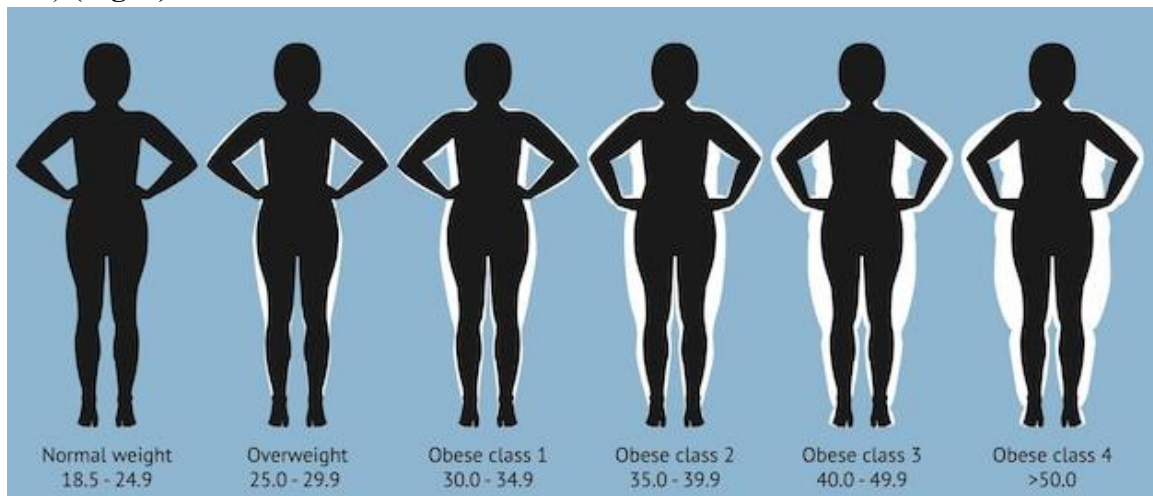


Fig. 1: Normal weight, overweight and obesity in women.

In this exploration, let us delve into the heart of women's health, illuminating the paths taken, the challenges encountered, and the victories celebrated in the ongoing journey of confronting obesity. Through shared experiences, expert perspectives, and empowering strategies, we aim to inspire, inform, and uplift those navigating this complex terrain. Together, let's embark on a journey of empowerment, resilience, and transformative change in women's health.

2. WAYS TO OVERCOME THE OBESITY IN WOMEN

Women can overcome obesity through a combination of healthy lifestyle changes. Firstly, adopting a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains can help manage weight (Hamadi, 2018). Regular physical activity, such as cardio exercises, strength training, or yoga, plays a crucial role in burning calories and improving overall fitness (Chaddha et al., 2017). Additionally, staying hydrated, getting enough sleep, and managing stress levels are essential for maintaining a healthy weight (Al Mutairi et al., 2022). Seeking support from healthcare professionals, nutritionists, or joining support groups can provide guidance and motivation on the weight loss journey (Allman-Farinelli & Nour, 2021). Ultimately, consistency and commitment to these lifestyle changes are key to overcoming the challenge of obesity for women (Forman & Butryn, 2015). Following are various ways by which women can overcome the problem of obesity.

2.1. Healthy eating habits

1. Focus on whole, unprocessed foods such as fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains.
2. Practice portion control and mindful eating to avoid overeating.
3. Limit intake of sugary beverages, refined carbohydrates, and high-fat foods.
4. Incorporate more fiber-rich foods to promote satiety and regulate blood sugar levels.
5. Eat a balanced diet: Consume a variety of foods from all food groups, including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats. Aim for a colorful plate with a diversity of nutrients.
6. Portion control: Be mindful of portion sizes to avoid overeating. Use smaller plates, bowls, and utensils to help control portion sizes and prevent mindless eating.
7. Limit processed foods: Minimize consumption of processed and packaged foods high in added sugars, unhealthy fats, and sodium. Opt for whole, unprocessed foods whenever possible.

8. Increase fruit and vegetable intake: Incorporate plenty of fruits and vegetables into your diet, aiming for at least five servings per day. These foods are rich in vitamins, minerals, fiber, and antioxidants that support overall health and weight management.
9. Choose lean proteins: Include lean protein sources such as poultry, fish, tofu, legumes, and low-fat dairy in your meals. Protein helps build and repair tissues, promotes satiety, and aids in weight loss.
10. Limit added sugars and sugary beverages: Reduce consumption of foods and beverages high in added sugars, such as soda, candy, pastries, and sugary cereals. Opt for water, herbal tea, or unsweetened beverages instead.
11. Healthy fats: Choose sources of healthy fats such as avocados, nuts, seeds, olive oil, and fatty fish. These fats provide essential fatty acids and help keep you feeling full and satisfied.
12. Hydration: Drink plenty of water throughout the day to stay hydrated and support overall health. Limit consumption of sugary drinks and alcohol, which can contribute excess calories and hinder weight loss efforts.
13. Mindful eating: Pay attention to hunger and fullness cues, and eat slowly to savor each bite. Avoid distractions such as screens or multitasking while eating, which can lead to overeating.
14. Meal planning and preparation: Plan and prepare meals ahead of time to ensure you have healthy options readily available. This can help prevent impulsive food choices and promote adherence to healthy eating habits.

2.2. Regular physical activity

1. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity per week.
2. Include strength training exercises at least two days per week to build muscle mass and boost metabolism.
3. Find enjoyable activities such as walking, swimming, cycling, or dancing to stay motivated and consistent.

2.3. Balanced lifestyle

1. Prioritize getting enough sleep, aiming for 7-9 hours per night, as inadequate sleep can disrupt hunger hormones and lead to weight gain.
2. Manage stress through relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, yoga, or spending time in nature.
3. Seek social support from friends, family, or support groups to stay motivated and accountable in your weight loss journey.
4. Set realistic goals and celebrate small victories along the way to maintain motivation and momentum.

2.4. Behavioural changes

Keep track of your food intake, physical activity, and progress towards your goals using a food diary or mobile app. Identify triggers for unhealthy eating habits, such as emotional eating or boredom, and find alternative coping strategies. Practice mindful eating by paying attention to hunger and fullness cues, eating slowly, and savouring each bite.

1. Make gradual changes to your lifestyle rather than attempting drastic changes all at once, as small, sustainable changes are more likely to lead to long-term success.
2. Set Realistic Goals: Establish achievable goals that are specific, measurable, and time-bound. Break larger goals into smaller, manageable steps to prevent overwhelm and track progress effectively.

3. **Identify Triggers:** Recognize the emotional, environmental, and social triggers that contribute to unhealthy eating habits. Common triggers may include stress, boredom, loneliness, or certain situations or environments.
4. **Develop Coping Strategies:** Find alternative coping strategies to deal with emotional triggers instead of turning to food for comfort. This could include practicing deep breathing exercises, engaging in physical activity, journaling, or seeking support from friends or family.
5. **Practice Mindful Eating:** Pay attention to hunger and fullness cues, and eat slowly and attentively without distractions. Mindful eating can help you become more aware of your body's signals and prevent overeating.
6. **Keep a Food Diary:** Track your food intake, including portion sizes, types of food, and the circumstances surrounding eating (e.g., emotions, location, time of day). Keeping a food diary can help you identify patterns, triggers, and areas for improvement.
7. **Modify Your Environment:** Make changes to your home and work environment to support healthy eating habits. Keep nutritious foods readily available and visible, while minimizing the presence of tempting, unhealthy options.
8. **Practice Portion Control:** Use smaller plates, bowls, and utensils to control portion sizes and prevent overeating. Be mindful of portion sizes when dining out or eating pre-packaged foods, as they often contain larger portions than necessary.

2.5. Professional support

Consider seeking guidance from a registered dietitian, nutritionist, or certified health coach to develop a personalized nutrition and exercise plan. Consult with a healthcare provider to rule out any underlying medical conditions contributing to obesity and to discuss potential treatment options, such as medication or bariatric surgery.

1. Registered dietitian (RD) or nutritionist

A registered dietitian or nutritionist can assess your dietary habits, nutritional needs, and health goals. They can provide personalized nutrition counseling, meal planning, and dietary recommendations tailored to your specific needs and preferences. RDs can help you develop a balanced eating plan that promotes weight loss while ensuring you meet your nutrient requirements.

2. Certified health coach

A certified health coach can offer guidance and support in adopting healthy lifestyle behaviours, including nutrition, physical activity, stress management, and sleep hygiene. They can help you set realistic goals, develop action plans, and track progress towards achieving your health and wellness objectives. Health coaches provide accountability, motivation, and encouragement to help you stay on track and overcome obstacles to behaviour change.

3. Exercise physiologist or personal trainer

An exercise physiologist or personal trainer can design a customized exercise program tailored to your fitness level, goals, and any medical considerations. They can provide instruction on proper exercise techniques, progression, and safety precautions to prevent injury and maximize results. Regular exercise under the guidance of a qualified professional can help you build strength, improve cardiovascular health, and enhance overall fitness while supporting weight loss efforts.

4. Behavioural therapist or psychologist

A behavioural therapist or psychologist can help you address underlying emotional, psychological, or behavioural factors that may contribute to obesity or hinder weight loss. They can provide counselling,

cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), or other evidence-based interventions to help you develop healthier coping mechanisms, manage stress, and overcome barriers to behaviour change.

Therapy can also address issues such as emotional eating, body image concerns, and self-esteem issues that may impact your relationship with food and body weight.

5. Medical doctor or bariatric specialist

A medical doctor or bariatric specialist can evaluate your overall health, assess any underlying medical conditions contributing to obesity, and recommend appropriate treatment options. They can provide medical supervision, monitoring, and management of obesity-related health conditions, such as diabetes, hypertension, and sleep apnea. In some cases, your doctor may recommend medical interventions such as prescription medications or bariatric surgery to support weight loss and improve health outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This exploration into empowering change in journey of women health against obesity, it becomes clear that the path to wellness is multifaceted and deeply personal. Through shared experiences, expert insights, and a collective commitment to holistic well-being, women can confront obesity with resilience, determination, and a sense of empowerment. This journey is not without its challenges, but it is also filled with moments of triumph, growth, and self-discovery. It's about more than just numbers on a scale; it's about reclaiming agency over one's health, embracing self-care, and fostering a positive relationship with one's body. The strategies discussed, from nutrition and physical activity to mental resilience and community support, serve as pillars of empowerment, guiding women toward sustainable lifestyle changes and long-term health benefits.

As we move forward, we continue to uplift and support one another in this journey. Let us challenge societal norms, celebrate diverse bodies, and advocate for health equity for all women. Together, we can empower change, redefine standards of beauty and health, and create a future where every woman can thrive in body, mind, and spirit.

REFERENCES

1. Al Mutairi, H. M., Al Shammari, D. F., Al Otaibi, K. O., Nasser, R., & Al Mutairi, S. M. (2022). The power of nutrition: how a healthy diet can shield against chronic diseases. *Power*, 8(02).
2. Allman-Farinelli, M., & Nour, M. (2021). Exploring the role of social support and social media for lifestyle interventions to prevent weight gain with young adults: Focus group findings. *Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics*, 34(1), 178-187.
3. Chaddha, A., Jackson, E. A., Richardson, C. R., & Franklin, B. A. (2017). Technology to help promote physical activity. *The American journal of cardiology*, 119(1), 149.
4. Forman, E. M., & Butryn, M. L. (2015). A new look at the science of weight control: how acceptance and commitment strategies can address the challenge of self-regulation. *Appetite*, 84, 171-180.
5. Frank Lipman, M. (2017). *Young and Slim for Life: 10 Essential Steps to Achieve Total Vitality and Kick-start Weight Loss that Lasts*. Hay House, Inc.
6. Frates, B., & Faries, M. D. (2023). *Empowering Behavior Change in Patients: Practical Strategies for the Healthcare Professional*. CRC Press.
7. Gates, M. (2019). *The moment of lift: How empowering women changes the world*. Flatiron Books.

8. Hamadi, C. (2018). Public health nutrition intervention to enhance healthy eating and lifestyle modification among Lebanese women with Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome University of Westminster].
9. Huang, T. T., Drewnowski, A., Kumanyika, S. K., & Glass, T. A. (2009). A systems-oriented multilevel framework for addressing obesity in the 21st century. *Preventing chronic disease*, 6(3).
10. Iafrate, M. (2018). The embodied experience and transformative learning: Moving towards a healthy and empowered self. In: Masters Thesis, University of Calgary). <http://hdl.handle.net/1880/108712>.
11. Lewis, A. (2024). Muted Hunger: Understanding Anorexic Thoughts. eBookIt.com.
12. Plough, A. L. (2020). Well-being: Expanding the definition of progress: Insights from practitioners, researchers, and innovators from around the globe. Oxford University Press.
13. Story, M., Giles-Corti, B., Yaroch, A. L., Cummins, S., Frank, L. D., Huang, T. T.-K., & Lewis, L. B. (2009). Work group IV: future directions for measures of the food and physical activity environments. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 36(4), S182-S188.
14. Taylor, V. H., Forhan, M., Vigod, S. N., McIntyre, R. S., & Morrison, K. M. (2013). The impact of obesity on quality of life. *Best practice & research Clinical endocrinology & metabolism*, 27(2), 139-146.