

Health Bulletin



Talking With Doctors About Weight Loss: A Healthy Start

(NAPSA)—Talking to a doctor before trying to lose weight can help tip the scales in your favor. But are people really communicating with their doctors about weight and appropriate treatment options?

A recent study says “no.” Only 12 percent of American adults say they have ever been told by a health care professional they are obese, according to a National Consumers League (NCL) study of 1,978 adult Americans, conducted by Harris Interactive. Yet the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that two-thirds of the adult population is overweight or obese.

To help improve doctor-patient communication—and help people honestly evaluate their own weight issues—NCL launched a new consumer campaign called “Choose to Lose.” It provides Web resources at www.nclnet.org/obesity for consumers who may need to lose weight but don’t know where to begin. It also provides weight-loss tips and ideas for working with your doctor to drop extra pounds.

“As someone who has experienced health benefits of losing a significant amount of weight and being able to keep it off, I think these new materials for consumers will help people recognize their weight problem, understand the weight-loss options available and motivate them to get help,” said Peggy Kindler, a 51-year-old Pittsburgh, Pa., resident who has battled weight issues all her life. In the year since having gastric banding surgery, Kindler has lost 53 pounds but continues to struggle with the challenges of weight loss.

Obesity Not Admitted by Most

According to the survey, there’s a difference between the way people perceive their weight and their actual weight category based on body mass index (BMI). Among



A new initiative helps people honestly evaluate their weight and health.

respondents who were obese according to their BMI, 82 percent considered themselves to be simply “overweight.” Only a minority, 20 percent of all respondents, claimed to know their BMI at all.

Perceptions About Obesity and Treatment

Despite the commonly held view that obesity is a serious disease, significant levels of cultural bias persist. Most U.S. adults report that obesity is still considered taboo, and half attribute the condition to a “lack of willpower.”

Additionally, while many adults accept various treatments, from exercise to acupuncture, there are still negatives associated with certain options. For example, although 79 percent of respondents agree weight-loss surgery can be a life-saving treatment, almost half held a negative view of this treatment.

On Track for Weight Loss

About half of people surveyed said that they have talked with their doctor about losing weight, although those who are obese were more likely to have done so. Additionally, only one-third discussed the health risks associated with their weight, and only 10 percent said their doctor helped them develop a plan to lose weight.