



UNDERWEIGHT – HEALTH RISKS

We all know that overweight people have high risk factors to their general health and well being, **BUT do you realize that being UNDERWEIGHT is just as risky?**

WHO is underweight? If you support someone who is losing weight rapidly or who seems too thin to you, see the doctor. A body mass index (BMI) of 19 for women and 20 for men is too thin.

High Risk

What are the health risks of low body weight?

- Anemia and Nutrient Deficiencies
- Bone loss and osteoporosis
- Heart irregularities and blood vessel diseases
- Amenorrhea (loss of periods for women)
- Increased vulnerability to infection and disease
- Delayed wound healing

High Risk

What are the warning signs that low body weight is becoming a problem?

- Lethargy – no energy
- Depression
- Loss of muscle bulk
- Loose, elastic skin

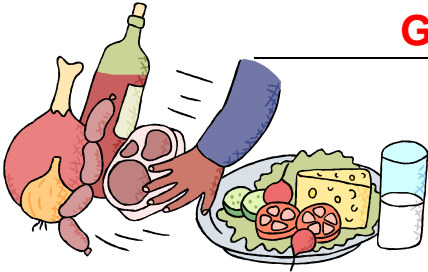
A SUDDEN WEIGHT LOSS SHOULD BE SEEN AS A REASON TO SEEK MEDICAL ADVICE!

What happens when people choose not to eat?

- Nutrient deficiencies are common
- Immune response is diminished
- Increased vulnerability to infection and disease
- Wounds don't heal as fast

CAUTION: There is a difference between nutrients and calories, and must be understood in order to prevent the reduction of essential nutrients in our diets.

GAINING WEIGHT CAN BE MUCH HARDER THAN ACHIEVING WEIGHT LOSS. THE PROCESS REQUIRES MEDICAL SUPERVISION. INSTEAD OF GUESSING AT WHAT MIGHT BE WRONG AND HOPING THAT WHAT YOU ARE DOING WILL WORK – GET MEDICAL ADVICE NOW!



Don't put someone on a diet without a doctor's prescription and a consultation with a registered dietitian or nutritionist!

**What might cause rapid and unexplained weight loss?
What should I watch for?**

- Loss of appetite from illness or diseases such as hyperthyroidism, cancer, Crohn's Disease or allergies, etc.
- Refusal to eat - a person might be hungry but more miserable after eating
- Depression, death of a close friend or loved one, or stress
- Malnutrition – a steady diet of unhealthy, non-nutritious foods
- Oral and swallowing difficulties – just too hard to eat
- Dental problems – making it uncomfortable to eat
- Failing vision – difficulties in meal preparation and actual eating
- Psychological disorders – new or ongoing
- Lack of mobility – just too much trouble to prepare food
- Abuse
- Late life paranoia or dementia

**REMEMBER:
CAREGIVERS NEED TO PAY PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO PEOPLE USING WHEELCHAIRS OR WHO ARE BEDFAST FOR SIGNS OF UNEXPECTED WEIGHT LOSS.**

For more information:

<http://www.wrongdiagnosis.com/u/underweight/underly.htm>
<http://www.cnn.com/HEALTH/library/DG/00020.html>

This flyer can be downloaded from the DDD website at:
<http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/ddd/publications.shtml>