



November Newsletter

The Weigh Station

“Do You Gain Weight As You Age?”

If there is a question I am asked most often, this one is a strong contender. Many patients have firsthand experience as the years go by the pounds become more difficult to keep off. Have you ever wondered exactly *why* we experience weight gain as we age? Your eating habits really are to blame.

Dr. Carolyn Apovine, the Director of Nutrition and Weight Management at Boston Medical Center and professor at Boston University School of Medicine, suggests the predominant reason for weight gain is a natural loss of muscle mass we all experience. Dr. Apovine states “the amount of lean body mass we have is the primary determinant of our metabolic rate.” In other words, the more muscle mass we have the more calories we will burn. Our muscle mass naturally declines around age 30 during a process called Sarcopenia. Dr. Apovine says that unless you are taking active measures to protect and build up that loss of muscle mass, your

body will require fewer calories and your metabolism will slow the loss of muscle and replace it with fat.

A number of studies have examined ways to improve and prevent Sarcopenia and the loss of muscle mass. These studies have proven exercising at least twice a week, eating a lean protein diet, and getting plenty of sleep were the best ways to allow your body to repair and rebuild muscle. A study conducted by the Canadian University in Montréal found that half of middle-aged Canadians are now classified as overweight or obese. As a result, these individuals are at an increased risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, sleep apnea, osteoarthritis, cancer, and death. The study also found that Canadian women who are obese are at an increased risk of breast cancer and endometrial cancer. Women who gain more than 20 to 30 pounds from age 18 to middle life double the risk of developing breast cancer compared to those who steadily maintain a normal weight.

New research is unraveling the complex cause of midlife weight gain regarding genetic predisposition metabolic arrangements coupled with environmental and lifestyle factors. Most programs show that instead of calorie equations, age related weight gain may be better explained by the loss of a multitude of factors such as nutrients, sleep, metabolic efficiency, hormones, and unfavorable gut bugs. We must also take environmental toxins into account as well.

DNA can be considered 'a road map'. However, the risk of obesity and diabetes is encoded in our DNA. Several genes are suspected by scientists. The recently discovered fat gene, which is nicknamed 'the King of Obesity', is directly linked to weight and metabolic dysfunction along with environmental factors. The fat gene is formally called IRX3.

We also have to consider 'gut bugs' and bacteria. Some bacteria is critical to our survival and other bacteria is a threat to it. Dysbiosis (also a term for dysbacteriosis) is the overgrowth of pathogenic or unfavorable bacteria in our gut, which has been implicated in

autoimmune disorders and diseases such as diabetes, cancer, and obesity. Recent research shows that bacteria play a vital role in energy extraction and contributes to diet-related obesity. The contributing culprit is a combination of the high bad-fat and high sugar diet the majority of Americans consume. This can trigger an overgrowth of the group of bugs noted as “Firmicutes”; these bugs are better equipped at harnessing refined sugars and make up the Western diet. More importantly, they increase glucose in the body and convert it to fat. Many studies have shown that compared to the ideal intake of high-good fat and a low carbohydrate-high protein diet the overgrowth of Firmicutes can cause significant weight gain.

Environmental factors also have the potential to influence the type of bugs engaged in our gut. During the second world war, over 80,000 industrial chemicals were pumped in our environment. Increasing the use of synthetic chemical productions has coincided with a tremendous rise in the prevalence of obesity. According to Dr. Jennifer Pearlman “mounting scientific evidence suggests that industrial chemicals are also considered obesity genes, having the potential to alter our metabolic function and lead to weight gain”.

Stress can significantly alter our dietary decisions and lead to weight gain. Too much cortisol and insomnia can also contribute to weight gain by keeping you awake at night and self sabotaging yourself by taking trips to the cabinets and refrigerator.

What does this ultimately mean for us? It means learning to eat correctly can significantly reduce the risk of becoming overweight or obese, which also decreases the increased risk of certain cancers. Try to understand what triggers you to open and peruse your pantry for food and take the appropriate measures to stop it.

I will encourage each of you to rethink what you are eating. Each month we have patients who are wanting restart. Their primary reason for restarting is they thought they could do the program by themselves but

subsequently struggled and failed due to not being properly educated and not having a stable support system. We welcome you back with open arms and want the best for you. As we approach Thanksgiving (by the way my favorite holiday) remember to be thankful for all that the Lord had laid at your feet. Love on the people that are close to you. Invite someone to visit your home and feed them a good meal. The older I age, the more I realize I need to love more folks than I have.

All of my patients are blessings to me in so many different ways. We hope we are a blessing to you all as well.

Blessing & Happy Thanksgiving,
Chuck Shaffer MD

The Recipe of the Month

Crab Stuffed Mushrooms



Makes 8 Servings

Ingredients

1 lb fresh mushrooms

7-8 oz. crab meat

4 green onions, thinly sliced

¼ tsp thyme

¼ tsp dried oregano

¼ tsp ground savory ground black pepper to taste

¼ C grated parmesan cheese

½ C mayonnaise
3 tbsp grated parmesan cheese
¼ tsp paprika

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. In a medium bowl combine crab meat, green onions, herbs, and peppers. Mix in mayonnaise and ¼ C parmesan cheese until well combined.
3. Refrigerate filling until ready for use. Wipe the mushrooms clean with a damp towel and remove the stems.
 4. Spoon out the gills and the base of stem, making deep cups.
Discard gills and stems.
5. Fill the mushroom caps with rounded teaspoonfuls of filling, and place them in an ungreased shallow baking dish. Sprinkle tops with parmesan cheese and paprika.
6. Bake for 15 minutes. Remove from oven and serve immediately.