REMOVING DISABILITY DISPARITIES IN WOMEN'S HEALTH

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CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

MANAGING WEIGHT

GOOD REASONS TO LOSE IF YOU ARE OVERWEIGHT:

- **Your blood cholesterol levels may improve.**
- **Your blood pressure levels may go down.**
- **Your blood sugar level may be better controlled.**
- **You could lower your risk of heart disease.**

Did you know...that even modest weight loss of just 5-10% of your body weight can lead to improvements in your health?

JUST THE FACTS!

- The rate of obesity among women who have physical limitations or disabilities is twice that of women in general.
- More than one-third of women with physical limitations are at a healthy weight compared to almost half of women without physical limitations.
- Most weight-loss programs do not address the unique problems faced by women with physical limitations.
- Standard clinical guidelines for weight management do not address the situation of women who are limited in their ability to be physically active.
- Medical schools rarely teach weight management or health promotion for women with physical limitations.
- Doctors' offices rarely have platform scales (almost all veterinarians do!) and are unable to monitor the weight of people who cannot stand.

"Everyday I look in the mirror and say to myself, 'I want to have a healthy weight. I

TIPS FROM WOMEN WITH PHYSICAL LIMITATIONS:

- Eat at least 5 fruits and vegetables a day; it really helps.
- Read labels and count both calories and carbohydrates.
- Start your day with a high fiber breakfast.
- When changing your diet, focus on positive things you plan to add (more fruits, vegetables, fiber, water) instead of things you must cut.
- Drink plenty of water everyday.
- Reduce your portion sizes.
- Take time each day to do whatever forms of exercise you can.
- Set realistic goals for success, such as "I'll eat an apple instead of cookies for my snack twice this week."

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MORE TIPS FROM WOMEN WITH PHYSICAL LIMITATIONS:

- Talk to other women with physical limitations about how they maintain a healthy weight.
- If you use a wheelchair but don't have access to a platform scale, monitor your weight by measuring certain parts of your body, such as waist, thighs, upper arm, or use a piece of clothing, like a blouse or pair of pants, as a measure for comparison.
- Cut down on fried and greasy foods.
- Try substituting a protein bar or a low-calorie, high nutrition drink for a meal several times a week.
- For one month, keep a daily food diary and a weekly record of your weight or measurements, and discuss the results with your health care provider.
- Keep moving; do whatever it takes to keep your food digesting and blood circulating, like wheeling over rough terrain, enjoying sex, and laughing.

"My secret is to avoid the 3P's, Pasta, Papas (white potatoes), and Pan (white bread). But dark chocolate—that's my salvation!

CAN YOU ANSWER "YES" TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS?

1. Do you have a say about what food is prepared in your home?
2. Do you eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables daily?
3. Do you read labels to learn about the ingredients in packaged foods?
4. Do you limit the amount of fat in your diet?
5. Do you eat regularly?
6. Have you received information from a dietician or other health care provider about your nutritional requirements?
7. If a health care provider has recommended a diet for you, do you usually follow it?

IF YOU ARE A WOMAN WITH A PHYSICAL LIMITATION WHO IS:

- African American or Mexican American
- between the ages of 45 and 64
- more severely limited in physical activities
- of low income or living below the poverty level
- unable to cook for yourself
- taking medications that have weight gain as a side effect, such as steroids

...then you may be at greater risk of having weight problems.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

How do you know if you are overweight or obese? Calculate your body mass index at

http://www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi/

Obesity and weight loss, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (800) 994-WOMAN (9662)

http://www.4woman.gov/faq/weightloss.htm

Healthy Eating Tips, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/tips/index.htm

Delicious Decisions, American Heart Association http://www.deliciousdecisions.org/