



# OBESITY – A SILENT KILLER

*Too much body fat can make you sick and kill you*

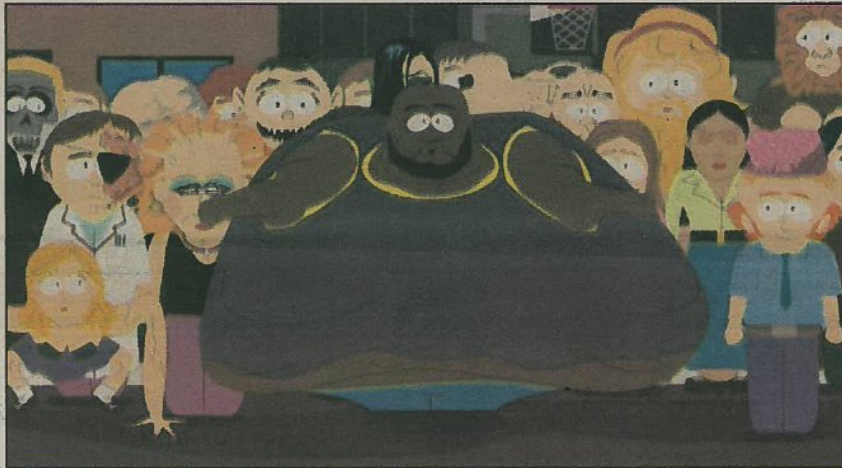
Jovel Johnson

*"A jus di Coca Cola bokkle shape, a it a run di place. Bruk out, Bruk out gal, a you have di shape..."*  
 - Well known Dancehall artiste.

It is no secret. Most Jamaican men love to see curves on their women. They don't even mind if she is a little chubby – as long as it is in the right places. To them it is a delight to see a woman who has the right assets – the "hour glass" figure is a treat to see. And if a voluptuous woman was ever to make the mistake of saying that she wanted to lose a couple of pounds, she would be met up on criticisms such as, "Wah?! Yuh mussi mad! An' lose all a dat? Yuh nah go look good. Yuh nuh see a shape a do it now?" While it is nice and flattering that men are appreciating the heavier side of the fairer sex (as it is the shape of the average woman), obesity should not be mistaken for a "Coca Cola Bokkle shape" and treated lightly. Having the right assets is a plus, but one must make sure that they are healthy assets.

### WHAT IS OBESITY?

Obesity is a BMI (Body Mass Index – a measure of body fat) of 30 and above. "Obesity is determined by measurement of body fat, not merely body weight. People might be over the weight limit for normal standards, but if they are very muscular with low body fat, they are not obese. Others might be normal and underweight, but still have excess body fat. Different measures and factors are used to determine whether or not a person is over weight to the degree that it threatens health," said Dr. Alverston Bailey, physician at Tretzel Medical Centre in Discovery Bay. Some of these measures and factors include BMI, waist circumference, waist-hip ratio, anthropometry and the presence or absence of other disease risk factors in addition to obesity.



Obesity can lower self-esteem.

### HOW DOES ONE BECOME OBESE?

Like all things that are bad, it isn't hard to come by. It is very easy to adapt to a bad lifestyle which include bad eating habits and a poor or no exercise-regimen.

"The Western lifestyle plays a major role in obesity," Dr. Bailey said. "The effect of Western culture can be demonstrated by the fact that adolescent obesity increases dramatically among second and third generation immigrants to the U.S. (United States), as they adopt the American diet and lifestyle," he said. A number of factors are involved. These include:

- The Western diet typically supplies more than 30%-of its calories from fat. Sugar is also a problem.
- Both leisure and working time are increasingly inactive, as people move from one seated position to another in their use of the automobile, the television, video games and the-computer.
- Night Eating. Consuming between 25% and 50% of daily calories between the evening meal and the next morning is referred to as night eating syndrome and is associated with obesity.
- Binge Eating and Eating Disorders. About 30% of people who are obese are binge-eaters who typically consume 5,000 to 15,000 calories in one sitting. The ideal calorie intake for a woman is 1,200 per day and 1,500 calories per day

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# HEALTHY TIMES

## ASK YOUR DOCTOR



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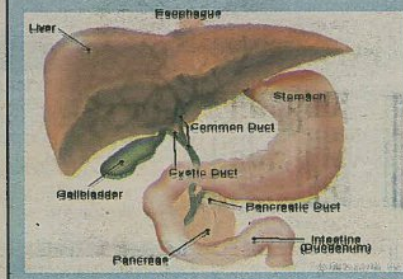
### Question:

*I feel that I may be at risk of developing Diabetes. What are the risk factors involving Diabetes?*

### Answer:

Although the causes of Diabetes are unknown, the following risk factors may increase your chance of developing Type 2 Diabetes.

- A family history of Diabetes. If a parent or sibling in your family has Diabetes, your risk of developing Diabetes increases.
- Age over 45
- Race or ethnic background. The risk of Diabetes is greater in Hispanics, Africans, Indians and Asians.
- Being overweight. If you are overweight, defined as a Body Mass Index (BMI) greater than 25.
- Hypertension. High blood pressure increases the risk of developing Diabetes.
- Abnormal cholesterol levels. HDL ("good") cholesterol levels under 35 mg/dL (milligrams per deciliter) and/or a triglyceride level over 250 mg/dL increases your risk.
- History of (developing Diabetes during pregnancy) or of delivering a baby over nine pounds can increase your risk.
- A history of polycystic disease (PCOS)
- Habitually inactive
- History of Vascular disease (such as stroke).





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5,000 to 15,000 calories in one sitting. The ideal calorie intake for a woman is 1,200 per day and 1,500 calories per day for men.

Infrequent Eating. There is some evidence to suggest that eating small frequent meals uses more calories than infrequent large meals.

There are specific groups at risk which include ex-smokers and shift workers. For ex-smokers, Nicotine increases the metabolic rate, and quitting, even without eating more,

can cause weight gain, which may be considerable. "A recent study found that individuals who work late shifts (between 4 p.m. and 8 p.m.) tend to eat more and take longer naps than day workers and are more likely to gain excess weight, Dr. Bailey said.

### Medical causes of Obesity

A number of medical conditions may contribute to being overweight, although they are rarely a primary cause of obesity. Under active thyroid (generally shows only a moderate weight increase of five to 10 pounds, mainly due to accumulation of fluid), very rare genetic disorders, abnormalities or injury to the hypothalamus region, oral contraceptives and certain anti-depressants are some of the medical causes of obesity.

### COMPLICATIONS/ILLNESSES ASSOCIATED WITH OBESITY

"Obesity is associated with more chronic health problems than smoking, heavy drinking, or being poor. And next to smoking, obesity is the most common preventable cause of death in Western society. According to one 2001 study, even being overweight increased the risk for diseases. In this 10-year study, the risks for developing diabetes, gallstones, hypertension, heart disease, stroke and colon cancer rose proportionally with the degree to which the individuals were overweight," Dr. Bailey said.

Other complications or illnesses associated with obesity are Cardiovascular Disease (heart disease), eyes and mouth disorders, reproductive and hormonal disorders, effects on the lungs, effects on the liver, sleep disorders (for example, Sleep Apnea and Narcolepsy) and emotional and social problems.

### HOW DO I PREVENT OR MANAGE OBESITY

There are many ways to prevent or manage obesity. How long the various methods will be used depends on the individual. One can try the following:

- CALORIE RESTRICTION which consists of cutting down the amount of calories consumed per day.
- LOW FAT AND HIGH FIBER DIETS. Some studies suggest that replacing foods high in fats with low complex Carbohydrates (fruits, vegetable and whole grains) may be more effective than calorie counting, particularly in maintaining weight loss. Also, diets rich in fiber from whole grains reduce the risk of Type 2 Diabetes.
- HIGH PROTEIN DIETS
- COMMERCIAL WEIGHT LOSS programs and meal replacements. These include Herbal Life, Slim-Fast, Sweet Success, Weight Watchers, Jenny Craig and NutriSystem.
- EXERCISE

Surgical procedures (Bariatric surgery - recommended for dangerously obese people). The object of most Bariatric surgeries is to limit the amount of food passing through the stomach and intestines. Others include The Lap Band and Gastric Pacemaker.

"The World Health Organization now considers obesity to be a global epidemic and a public health problem as more nations become 'Westernized'. Globally, an estimated 250 million adults are now obese and many more are overweight. The prevalence of obesity in Jamaica has risen dramatically over the past few years. It is now estimated that 45% of Jamaicans are now overweight - 30% in females and 15% in males," Dr. Bailey said.

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