

Obesity important points

- Overweight and obesity are terms that refer to an excess of body fat and they usually relate to increased weight-for-height.
- The association between obesity and increased risk of many serious diseases and mortality is well documented.
- Adipose is loose connective tissue comprising of about 80% fat. Its main role is to store energy in the form of lipids and it actually produces hormones such as leptin and estrogen.
- Leptin is a protein hormone that enables us to feel full, Adipose tissue produces leptin proportionally, so more fat more leptin. If we have too much leptin it doesn't work properly thus not enabling us to feel full so we eat more, more fat and so on. When we lose weight it starts working again as it comes back into normal amounts.
- Primitive man could override satiety signals and eat when full if the food would spoil etc. We still have this ability. But primitive man could also inhibit eating to ration etc, we can do this too! But it is a pre frontal cortex mediated process so need to be intellectually in control.
- Dopamine. Study shows that overweight women in mri scanner produce less dopamine when eating food (probably chocolate) so the more we eat the less good we feel so the more we eat and so on. Study recommends intervention that increases dopamine so we don't rely on food. That's where we can help enormously.
- Cortisol - Too much Cortisol favours fat storage instead of using fat for energy, and will store it in abdominal region. Abdominal fat also has more Cortisol receptors so you can actually produce more stress. So more fat equals more stress equals more fat and so on. So we need to reduce Cortisol.
- Challenge stress vs threat stress. Study shows that as Cortisol stimulates hunger and feeding you don't want to produce too much. This paper shows that if you view a situation as especially threatening (we're all doomed etc) then there is no ceiling level to how much Cortisol you will produce, and thus likely to comfort eat. Whereas if you see situation as a challenge (difficult but doable) then another part of the brain steps in and caps off your level of Cortisol to protect you from it. Thus not comfort eating. We know that as we reduce anxiety we will think in less black and white and catastrophic ways thus reducing our Cortisol and not comfort eating.

As you can see the main common denominators are reducing stress and increasing positivity, that's what we do!