

## Drew Payne, M.D.

Can you tell us about the global rise in obesity rates and if lifestyle plays a role in that?

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So obesity in the last 10 to 20 years has been on the rise globally but especially in the United States, and West Texas is no different from that. It mirrors what is happening all across the nation. The question then is, is lifestyle a factor to that? And it absolutely is. Lifestyle affects people's weight. The weight that people have is controlled by two different things. There's the genetics that they have, and then the epigenetics. Epigenetics are the environment that the genetics are put into and lifestyle goes right along with that.

How do you determine if someone has obesity or not and what factors can contribute to that?

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Obesity itself is determined by a BMI, which is definitely an imperfect calculator, but it helps us to categorize people into risk factors for health. A BMI, above 30 is considered obese, and then 27.5 and above, with one comorbidity like diabetes or hypertension. That is when a person would qualify for medications to treat their weight. Certain things that affect weight and how easy or hard it is for someone to lose their weight, are socioeconomic factors, cultural factors, and then also geographically, where people live. So socio economically, if you live in what we call a food desert or healthcare desert, you're at higher risk for having more weight because you don't have access to good foods. We have a lot of different cultures in the United States and certain cultures eat different things than others. So of course, high fat fried foods is West Texas. We like the most high calorie foods, so that can definitely make things a little harder for West Texans to lose weight as well.

What health risks are associated with obesity?

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The biggest one is what I call metabolic disease. That involves diabetes, cardiovascular disease, so high blood pressure, hyperlipidemia or high cholesterol levels. But it can also cause other things that we don't often think about, which is arthritis in your joints. It can also cause issues that lead to cancer in the future. So obesity is one of these diseases that contributes to so many different things, and it kind of sets up a foundation on whether you're going to have a healthy life or not based on this one thing.

Can you tell us about different weight loss treatments and when they might be recommended?

3:05

Bariatric surgery is recommended at a BMI above 40 or 35 and above, with a comorbidity. Bariatric surgery is very, very efficacious when it comes to losing weight. We have several bariatric surgeons here in town that do a tremendous job of that, including at Texas Tech. And other treatments, the main thing recently has been more and more talk about these shots that

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are available. So these are called GLP-1 medications. They're terrific when it comes to losing weight. People can lose sometimes around 15% of their body weight which is quite a bit. We start to see good things happen, metabolically or health wise, at just 5% of weight loss. So this is much better than that.

### How do those weight loss medications work?

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The GLP-1 medications work by a couple different things. They adjust your body's perception of satiety. So what I mean by that is they actually make you feel fuller and then they also slow the motility of your gut, so that does a couple things metabolically for it, but it allows your body to feel fuller for a longer period of time, and for you to have satiety for a longer period of time. That lets us consume less calories, but then also changes our body set point of where our weight is and can drop it down significantly.

### Are they safe for everyone to use? Are the effects different for people without diabetes?

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The medications are definitely safe for use in people that don't have diabetes. Now, they were originally studied and marketed for people with diabetes. We quickly found out that these work also to help people lose weight without causing a drop in their blood sugar. So what the FDA did is they looked at the data after that, and the drug companies studied it in different populations, and it's very safe for both populations. Now that being said, not any medication is a panacea to fix everything, right? So based on your risk factors and other things, your physician may choose other medications beyond just these shots, and there's a lot of those out there now, much more than there was even 10 or so years ago.

### Are there risks in combining these weight loss medications with other medications?

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There's risk in all medications. Any medication you take can have a side effect and or will have a side effect. For those side effects, you need to talk to your doctor about and make sure that the medicines that you're currently on aren't going to be affected, or if they are affected, an adjustment to those current medications needs to happen before you start on this pathway. That's why it's so good for people to plug into an obesity specialist or their primary care doctor who already knows them some and can look at them as a whole person and say, "Let's adjust these medications, because I know you from this instance and something happened to you," and "We need to make that adjustment with these new medications."

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Do you have any tips or recommendations for people who want to lose weight naturally or with the aid of these medications?

6:27

Anytime I talk with somebody about losing weight, I encourage them to focus on a healthy diet. And a healthy diet is kind of a mixed bag. What I mean by that is that there's a lot of different definitions as far as healthy goes. But what I encourage people to do is stay away from fad diets and then try to make incremental changes that they can consistently make for a long period of time. Try to do something that you could even do on your worst day. So the worst day you have, if you can do that, that's a great place for you to start, especially when it comes to exercise or dietary changes, that way you can stay consistent. Now, consistency is not perfection, so you don't have to be perfect in what you do, but once you kind of have a step back, go ahead and continue to try changes, because everybody's going to have a step back.

Are there any common mistakes people make when trying to lose weight?

7:25

I think one of the biggest mistakes that people make is trying to out exercise their diet. Exercise is really important but also the foundation of weight loss is really what you eat and your nutrition. So there's no real way for you to out exercise your diet. So that's one mistake I see a lot. The other one is that I see people try fad diets and consistently grow frustrated because the fad diet didn't work for them. So I tell people, what you need to do is develop a partner for your weight loss journey, and that partner can be your primary care physician or your spouse or a friend, but as long as you have somebody that holds you accountable, that's really the best thing you can do.

Any advice for people who are setting weight loss goals this new year?

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Every year during New Years people tend to focus on their weight, and I think that's a great opportunity for you to make changes in your life. It's also a great opportunity for you to grow really frustrated with not losing weight. That's something I see a lot in my clinic, is that people give up after a period of time. And I'd say to that that New Year's is a great time to start something, but the important part of it is to stay consistent with it. Consistency is really what will build your success in a long period of time. And consistency is not perfection. That doesn't mean that you go to the gym every time you said, but what you can do is consistently make small changes that in a long time will help to pay off.

Any tips to help people stay motivated to be consistent?

9:08

So staying motivated is also something that people struggle with a lot, and I think it's really hard for people to stay motivated when they're only doing something by themselves. So find a group of people that can support you through that and see the changes that happen. Most people

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didn't become overweight or obese overnight, so those changes aren't going to happen overnight, and you're not going to be able to see those changes happen overnight. So when someone comes up to you after you've been working for two or three months and says, "Hey, it looks like you've been losing some weight," a lot of times you don't feel that yourself, but obviously other people can start to notice those things and so that's the trick to kind of keeping people around you and being consistent there.

### Anything else to add?

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The struggle for weight loss or losing weight and being fit is not new. So even though we have these new medications that help us out, it's just another tool in our toolbox to help you become more healthy. So as you go through your journey of health, you need to have a primary care physician that helps you with that. The online ordering of medications, while that might get you the shot itself, it doesn't set you up for success by having an accountability partner and staying consistent with things.