

HEALTH & WELL BEING

Heart & Stroke Foundation report: Canadians trapped on weight-loss rollercoaster



A Heart and Stroke Foundation online survey of almost 2,000 Canadians found that 62% reported intentionally losing five or more pounds over the past five years but failed to keep the weight off. And 70% of those who were overweight or obese regained all or even more pounds after their weight-loss efforts. "Obesity and overweight have become one of the leading public health concerns in Canada," said Dr. Marco Di Buono, Director of Research, Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario. "We know that within the past 30 years, the prevalence of obesity doubled

among those ages 40 to 69 and tripled among those 20 to 39."

This is even more concerning as the Heart and Stroke Foundation Report on Canadians' Health recently declared young adults— ages 20-39— as Canada's new "at risk" group. Within this age group, 3 million are inactive, 2.5 million are overweight or obese, 2 million smoke, 164,000 have high blood pressure and 66,000 have diabetes.

According to the Foundation's weight survey, young Canadians represent the largest percentage of all age groups who spend the most amount of money for their weight-loss efforts.

"Excess weight and extra body fat around your waist can lead to high blood pressure, unhealthy cholesterol levels and type 2 diabetes, increasing your risk of heart disease and stroke," said Dr. Di Buono.

Younger adults are also more likely to spend money in an attempt to lose weight. Fifty percent of overweight people 20 to 39 report paying for their weight loss efforts, such as club or gym fees, special diet foods or supplements. Almost half (42%) spent \$500 or more. However, older

adults aren't far behind: among those 40 to 69, about a third report buying fitness equipment and other items. In total, almost four out of every 10 people who try to lose weight report spending money to do so.

"We all want immediate gratification when it comes to losing weight and research has shown that the quick fix is not the way to go if you want to keep it off," said Carol Dombrow, Registered Dietitian. "Fad diets tend to eliminate certain essential and nutritional food groups

such as fat or carbohydrates. The bottom line is that fad diets don't work in the long term. People can't keep them up forever and the weight tends to come back. More importantly, there is little research about the long-term health effects of fad diets."

According to the Heart and Stroke Foundation, it is important to consult a healthcare professional to help you make healthy lifestyle changes so that you can achieve and maintain a healthy weight.



H&S launches Healthy Weight action plan

The Heart and Stroke Foundation has also introduced the Heart&Stroke Healthy Weight Action Plan— a free, personalized, 12-session online resource— to help Canadians achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

The program mirrors the experience of sitting down with a weight-loss counsellor which provides a structured program and resources to help set real-

istic goals and help you make lifestyle changes that will last a lifetime. Slow weight loss is best and most realistic for keeping the weight off long term; one to two pounds (1 kg) a week is sufficient. A modest loss of as little as five per cent of body weight can reduce your high blood pressure and total blood cholesterol.

For details visit www.heartandstroke.ca/hwplan

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