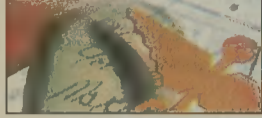


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Health Watch



Losing may have outsized advantages

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

For the obese, a small loss may be a big victory.

Evidence is building that really heavy people may be able to greatly improve their odds of dodging weight-related illnesses while remaining very heavy.

The secret: Lose just a few pounds. Weight reduction, it appears, is powerful medicine for the large, no matter how seemingly insignificant the dose.

Many obesity experts agree that getting down to a normal size may not be necessary to avoid much of the bad effects of being big. Dropping just 10 or 15 pounds—too little to even miss on many people—can have a surprising and substantial effect on the body processes that obesity disrupts.

If true—and the idea still has some skeptics—this means that at least a partial antidote to the apocalyptic predictions about the obesity epidemic may be within reach, even if people remain vastly overweight by every measure.

"The bad news is people are getting more and more obese," says Dr. Christie Ballantyne, a cardiologist at Methodist Hospital in Houston. "The good news is losing a modest amount of weight can have really profound health benefits."

Of course, many big people want to slim down so they will look better. But doctors say the best reason for getting control of weight is to be healthier.

"That is one of the most important public health messages to get out to people," says Dr. Judith Fradkin, diabetes endocrinology head at the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. "The goal should be to become healthy, not become a fashion model. If you move in the right direction even a little bit, that can make a big difference in health."

That's good news for people who throw up their hands in defeat because they cannot get down to their ideal weight. Just a loss of 15 pounds for someone 90 pounds too heavy can make a big difference, Fradkin says.

There is little doubt among mainstream experts that obesity is a potentially deadly condition, blamed for about 300,000 deaths annually in the United States alone. For a middle-aged person, it is considered to be about as bad for health as smoking is.

Many experts believe that the real hazard of being overweight is the torrent of hormones and other chemicals pumped out by fat storage cells, which become hyperactive when filled to capacity with fat.

The damaging effects of obesity are obvious on a physical exam. Not every nondiabetic, overweight person has all these abnormalities—which can raise the risk of heart attacks, diabetes and strokes—but many do. The most common:

•HDL cholesterol, the good variety, is unusually low. See LOSING/2B

# Building up a friendly exchange

*With maturity, men and women go about making new pals in totally different ways*



By Cheris F. Hodges  
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Some things get easier as you get older. Making friends, though, is not one of those things.

Especially if you're a woman.

Shawn Haskins, a hair stylist at Honey Salon & Spa on Central Avenue, says the women she has met in Charlotte are "extremely nice or extremely nasty."

"For the most part, people here are accepting," Haskins said, noting that women sometimes look at each other as competition and it takes a while for them to warm up to someone new.

"We put up a wall," she said.

Professional counselor Laura Barrett said when women look for girlfriends they are looking for a deeply emotional relationship.

"It takes a long time to get to

know someone on an intimate level," she said.

Haskins, who is new to Charlotte, said she has made friends with women at her job, and if she didn't work with females, doubts she would have the friends she has.

"By the time we get this age, it is mostly fear (that stops you from making new friends)," said Haskins, 29.

Barrett offers another reason. "Everybody is going in different directions," she said. "When you look at high school and college years, you usually room together and go to class together. A lot of time, adults don't have that."

Men, however, say making new friends is easy. Samuel Hosey, 55, said that he is a peo-

ple person and when he moved to Charlotte made friends through bowling and church.

"I love meeting people," he said.

Barrett said men make friendships easier than women because they talk about sports and avoid emotional topics.

"Men don't have the same support system that women have," Barrett said. "Men don't go there (on emotional issues)."

So, what to do in order to make friends? Barrett suggests getting involved in the community. "It's harder to meet new people unless you reach out," she said. "I see a lot of single people who are tired of the bar scene. I encourage them the volunteer their time."

## Moving beyond puppy love

By Leigh Ervin  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

How old is old enough to be in a mature relationship?

A relationship can be generalized as a serious trusting bond between two individuals. With this in mind, is it possible for a teenager to be in one considering their relative lack of real-world experience?



Parents often declare their children are too young to do all sorts of things: from understanding to driving, dating and intimacy. Colby Hardien, 16, a South Mecklenburg High School junior, says: "To me there is no real age that confirms that a person is able to love someone. If a person is young and they think that they've found that perfect person but they've been told that they're too young to feel strong emotions toward the opposite sex, their dream relationship might just pass them by."

Others believe that young adults are better able to determine a mature relationship. De'ontra Howard, a junior at Harding University High, says You have to be from the ages 18 and 20 to actually be aware of your true feelings for someone. When you're older you've had time to develop and experience more of life, at a young age, it's just puppy love."

Phillip Cole, a Charlotte relationship counselor who works with teens, adults, and children, says an individual's level of maturity is most important to strong relationships.

"It's not an age thing," he said, "although adolescence is a process of change which means that your body is changing physically and your emotions are changing daily. It can be a turbulent time and making serious decisions at this time can cause a lot of problems."

Cole adds, "adults can say that they are going to be with this person for 50 years but in actuality they don't know who they're going to be with in the next month. Just because a person is 25 doesn't mean that they are necessarily mature."

Relationships can be compared to working a job. If one goes to work and does what needs to be done, they are rewarded with a paycheck, in this case a lasting relationship. Xavier King, a sophomore at N.C. State University, says "A mature relationship can only be possible if the people in question are mature themselves, and if they think that they are old enough to pursue their feelings, let them make their own mistakes. You learn mostly from your mistakes."

Mistakes are commonly perceived as bad, but in the long run one learns from them. It also applies to young relationships. When a person experiences puppy love gone bad, it's a part of the maturation process.

Yashica Seegars, 27, believes that a lasting mature relationship has to have the trust and honesty to be able to really grasp the idea of love.

"It's all in the eye of the beholder," she said.

## Summer eating fare is tasty and healthy, too



PHOTO/WADE NASH

By Amanda Ward  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Fruits and vegetables add life to salads, tarts, and sorbets. There are many summer fruits that not only taste good but also keep you healthy.

Bananas are rich in minerals and vitamins; and they help maintain a good body balance. They are also great for potassium and calcium boost. "I enjoy putting bananas on my Kellogg's because not only are they healthy but they add flavor," said Christopher Clyburn of Charlotte.

Like bananas, raspberries are also rich with potassium and calcium. Strawberries, peaches, plums and kiwi add

Please see SUMMER/3B

