

# Losing weight could mean gaining a sex life

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

VANCOUVER, British Columbia —Losing a little weight can do wonders for your sex life.

So says Duke University psychologist Martin Binks, who presented a study Monday at a meeting of The Obesity Society showing that shedding a few pounds can improve things in the bedroom by making people feel better about their bodies.

"You reap a lot of benefit from a moderate weight loss of 10 percent," Binks said. "It's a wonderful message. You don't have to reach some ideal weight to be healthy and happy."

It is one of the few studies to examine the mental and emotional problems that obesity can cause for intimacy, not just the physical troubles such as hormone imbalances or impotence.

"There has not been a lot of research in this area," said Dr. Susan Yanovski, director of obesity research at the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. Improving your sex life "would be another good reason to lose weight if you're obese."

The study involved 161 women and 26 men, average age 45, with an average body mass index of 41. (A score of 30 or above on this height-and-weight formula is considered obese).

All were enrolled in a diet program at the Hennepin County Medical Center in Minneapolis and had lost 17.5 percent of their body weight after one year and 13 percent after two years. (They regained some of the pounds they initially shed).

They answered questions about the quality of their sex

lives when the study began and every three months thereafter. The most striking improvement in attitudes was seen at three months, when they had lost about 12 percent of their initial weight.

At the outset, 68 percent of women said they felt sexually unattractive. One year into the diet, only 26 percent did. About 63 percent originally did not want to be seen undressed, but only 34 percent felt that way a year later.

Initially, 21 percent of women said they were not enjoying sex; only 11 percent said so after one year. "The number of males in the study does limit what we can say about men," but feelings of unattractiveness and unwillingness to be seen naked also applied to them, Binks said. Even when many of them wanted to have sex, the excess weight made it an ordeal.

"They'll tell us about simple mechanical difficulty," Binks said.

That certainly was true of Carlene Wellington, 62, and her husband, Gary, 63, of suburban Tacoma, Wash. Both were a healthy weight when they married 42 years ago, until she started to "show love" by cooking massive amounts of food. She and her husband ballooned to 237 and 355 pounds, respectively, and their sex life suffered.

"We had about 600 pounds in our bed," she said.

"I called it my workbench," because sex was so physically difficult, he said.

Carlene Wellington was embarrassed by her body.

"I could get dressed without showing any skin," and had to have the lights off when they had sex, she said. During sex, she often felt pressure in her

chest, caused by anxiety and dread.

She now weighs 153 pounds, and her tall husband a trim 235. "It's just like being married to a different person, or going back 25 years," she said.

Her husband recalled the day 13 years ago—after the couple had just lost a combined 200 pounds—when he looked at wife one morning and told her she had a cute butt.

"I don't know if she thought I was trying to make her late for work or not," he said. But he was struck by how much he wanted to.

The Wellingtons are leaders in their local chapter of TOPS, or Take Off Pounds Sensibly, an international support group that had a display at the obesity conference in Vancouver.

The prospect of a better sex life could motivate some over-

Please see LOSING /4B

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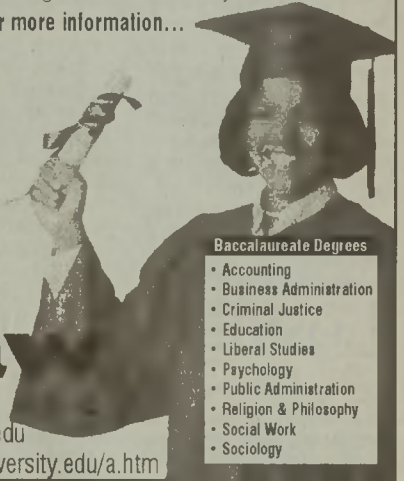
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## Highway widening

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possibility here if we work together."

Residents will be able to discuss the history and the future of the area at two community meetings—Nov. 7 at Green Pond Baptist Church and Nov. 8 at Whale Branch Middle Schools.

## U.S. college price increases moderate, but loans still rising

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Price increases at colleges and universities moderated somewhat this year, but students who need financial aid are still relying increasingly on loans to pay for higher education, according to figures released Tuesday by the College Board.

The average cost of tuition and fees at a four-year college hit \$5,491 this year, up 7.1 percent from 2004-2005, according to the annual survey by the nonprofit group. That was the smallest percentage increase since 2001-2002.

Prices at two-year public colleges rose 5.4 percent to \$2,191, while at private schools they rose 5.9 percent to \$21,235.

The increases are below levels seen in recent years; last year, prices at public four-year schools rose about 10 percent, and 13 percent the year before that. But the cost hikes are still well above the general inflation rate.

And while many students don't pay the full "list price," other figures released Tuesday indicate student aid is not keeping up with need.

Student aid from the government and other sources did increase \$10 billion to \$129 billion in 2004-05, the last year for which aid figures are available. But for the third straight year, more of the increase came in the form of loans than from grants, which students do not have to pay back.

That isn't necessarily a big problem for many families. Interest rates are low, and the increased earning power of a college degree is generally worth the average debt for undergraduate borrowers—\$15,500 at public universities for a bachelor's degree. But it is likely to compound concerns that families on the margins of being able to afford college are being priced out.

Including charges for room and board as well as tuition and fees, costs at public four-year schools rose 6.6 percent to an average of \$11,376. At private four-year nonprofit schools, they rose 5.7 percent to \$27,465.

However, only 12 percent of students are enrolled in colleges where tuition and fees exceed \$24,000.