

The Esthetician's Role in **WEIGHT** Management

by pat lam

Body therapies in today's spas offer a plethora of staple body treatments and even some more exotic ones. Typical body treatments include modalities such as water therapy, electrical equipment and different forms of body massage. (See **Body Therapies**.)

All these treatments propose to reduce stress and induce a sense of wellness by reducing formation of free radicals, the molecules that age the skin and body. These effects are on a short-term basis, but they can transfer to long-term benefits simply by incorporating advice on positive lifestyle changes to help reduce high health risks of aging diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer, osteoporosis and arthritis.

Wellness

According to James Meschino, DC, a wellness health practitioner in Toronto, **wellness** can be defined as the *active pursuit of both mental and physical health*. In other words, one cannot achieve the state of wellness unless actively participating in healthy living that includes a nutritious diet, regular physical activity, stress management and other positive lifestyle behaviors. Today's society actively is seeking wellness and preventive care, especially the aging baby boomers, many of whom are well-educated and possess more disposable income. Advanced technologies in medical, sanitary and health care have contributed toward greater longevity among humans. The ubiquitous media's report on wellness also has spilled over to the educated youth who also has become very interested in pursuing the wellness ethic. Yet, despite all this information, why is there an obesity epidemic throughout the world, especially in North America? If we are treating our clients with "wellness," how can we keep them "well" if they are overweight and obese? Can these body therapies actually improve the health of our clients or are they just fluff? Can the esthetician intervene in this area of treatment and help promote weight management?

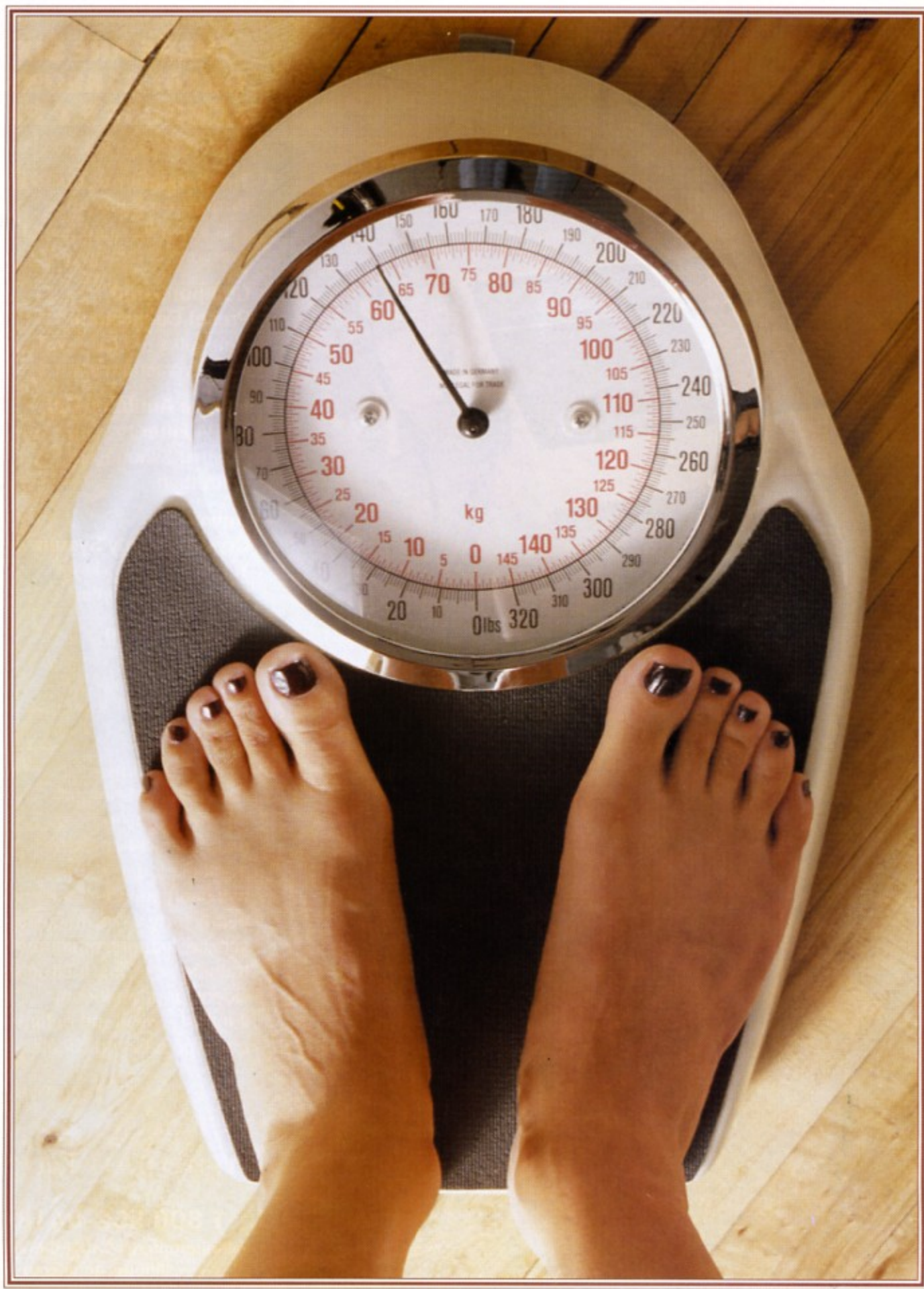
Overweight individuals often look and act so much older than their chronological age. Not only does the face appear distorted, but the body also lacks mobility and agility like the elderly. With weight loss, individuals can look so much younger that they may be unrecognizable at first. A study by Galuska et al¹ suggests that people are more likely to change their lifestyle behaviors if under the guidance of a health care practitioner than those who do not receive any advice. Can

This article is based on the author's presentation at the *Face & Body 2002 Spa & Healthy Aging Conference and Exhibition* in Santa Clara, California, in September.

Skin care professionals should seek additional training before offering any new services dealing with nutrition, fitness or supplements.



*Pat Lam has been an educator in the health and beauty field for the past 25 years. She received her bachelor's degree from the University of Toronto, and is vice president of Skin Care Consultants and vice principal of the internationally known Lam School of Advanced Esthetics in Toronto. She is a CIDESCO international examiner and a CIDESCO gold medal winner for stress therapy. Author of **Practical Nutrition for the Health and Beauty Professional**, she is certified in all areas of fitness including aerobic instruction and personal training. She recently became board certified as an anti-aging health practitioner by the American Academy of Anti-Aging Medicine (A4M).*



Body Therapies

Water therapies: Hydrotherapy, whirlpool, sauna/steam/scrub, underwater massage and Vichy showers.

Electrical equipment: Electrical brushes for exfoliation, mechanical vacuum suction units for lymph drainage, galvanic current for penetrating products, different forms of electrical muscle stimulators—modified faradic currents, interferential current, ultrasound, which has a mechanical and thermal action on body tissues, gyratory massage (G5) and for cellulite, a device that incorporates a vacuum suction action in conjunction with gyratory massage for cellulite conditions. Several states prohibit the use of certain electrical equipment such as galvanic current and faradic-type currents by estheticians.

Manual treatments: Body wraps and various forms of body massage such as Swedish body massage; lymphatic drainage; reflexology; ayurvedic; Thai massage; and stone therapy, the current North American trend.

the esthetician intervene and play this role? Due to the multitude of information in the media today, many people are more knowledgeable about nutrition and aware of the positive correlation between excess body weight and high health risks, including early mortality. In fact, obesity and diabetes are among the leading causes of death in the United States. Why is obesity out of control?

Weight management

The holistic approach to skin care has been embraced by many estheticians promoting wellness. Many clients visit their esthetician more regularly than nutritionists, dieticians and other health care practitioners, so the esthetician is placed in a strategic position to deliver information and modify negative lifestyle behaviors. We do not have to be a nutritionist to guide people to eat healthier foods. The knowledgeable esthetician can enhance body wellness by introducing them to a series of slimming and toning treatments to promote weight loss and control. Studies on weight control showed that although most people are always trying to lose or maintain weight, 20.1% of overweight participants and 13.5% of obese were not trying to lose or maintain weight, 27% of American adults did not participate in any physical activity, while another 28.2% were not active on a regular basis.¹ When overweight and obese individuals make sensible food choices and increase their physical activity, they can control or maintain their body form in some way.

By using these simple strategies, the esthetician can contribute toward preventive health care, and with higher education, can have a powerful influence in society. Note that estheticians can only help clients who are overweight and don't have a medical history. Obese clients or individuals with a medical history must be referred to a physician. Although more attention usually is paid to the overweight, the underweight individual also suffers from health hazards as well. Ultimately, the goal in preventive body care is to reduce major health risks by maintaining a healthy body weight. The esthetician needs to learn about nutrition, fitness, stress management and other anti-aging therapies by taking courses in nutrition, fitness and stress management part-time or on-line through colleges and universities. Read all articles on these topics in the esthetic trade journals. Participate in fitness classes to get fit and healthy, and as your body becomes healthier and stronger, you will then truly understand why fitness must be implemented in body therapy to feel healthier, younger and more energetic. This move can change your life. As an esthetician, it is important to understand the underpinnings of obesity, as well.

What is obesity?

There is a difference between being overweight and being obese. Overweight means excess body weight—fat, bone and tissues—relative to the recommended body weight for that height. (See **Figure 1**.) Obesity refers to excess fatty tissues in the body and is defined when the percentage of body fat is more than 30% in females and 24% for males, who tend to have more muscular tissue than females. However, the critical factor is not how much body fat actually exists, but where it is located on the body.

During the 1990s, research studies showed that obesity and diabetes developed as epidemics among Americans, and, according to published information on nutrition, obesity rates continues to rise. Researchers now are looking into lack of physical activity as a stronger cause of obesity. Studies by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in 2001 indicated that more than 50% of adults in the United States are overweight with 1:4 clinically obese, and even more alarming, more than 30% of children are obese. This presents high risks for serious health problems with implications of high

Height	Small frame	Medium frame	Large frame
4'8"	86-92 lbs	90-101 lbs	98-113 lbs
4'10"	91-98 lbs	96-107 lbs	104-120 lbs
5'0"	96-104 lbs	102-114 lbs	110-126 lbs
5'2"	102-110 lbs	108-121 lbs	116-133 lbs
5'5"	111-119 lbs	116-131 lbs	126-143 lbs
5'9"	126-135 lbs	133-149 lbs	143-160 lbs

Figure 1. Ideal body weight.

$$\text{BMI} = \frac{\text{Weight (kg)}}{\text{Height (meters)}^2} \quad \text{OR} \quad \frac{\text{Weight (lbs)}}{\text{Height (inch)}^2 \times 705}$$

Source: Whitney & Rolfes, 1993

Figure 2. Formula for Body Mass Index.

Height	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	
	Body Weight (pounds)																							
4'10"	86	91	96	100	105	110	115	119	124	129	134	138	143	148	153	158	162	167	172	177	181	186	191	
4'11"	89	94	99	104	109	114	119	124	128	133	138	143	148	153	158	163	168	173	178	183	188	193	198	
5'0"	92	97	102	107	112	118	123	128	133	138	143	148	153	158	164	169	174	180	185	190	195	201	206	211
5'1"	95	100	106	111	116	122	127	132	137	143	148	153	158	164	169	175	180	186	191	196	202	207	213	218
5'2"	98	104	109	115	120	126	131	136	142	147	153	158	164	169	175	180	186	191	196	202	207	213	218	
5'3"	102	107	113	118	124	130	135	141	146	152	158	163	169	175	180	186	191	197	203	208	214	220	225	
5'4"	105	110	116	122	128	134	140	145	151	157	163	169	174	180	186	192	197	204	209	215	221	227	232	
5'5"	108	114	120	126	132	138	144	150	156	162	168	174	180	186	192	198	204	210	216	222	228	234	240	
5'6"	112	118	124	130	136	142	148	155	161	167	173	179	186	192	198	204	210	216	223	229	235	241	247	
5'7"	115	121	127	134	140	146	153	159	166	172	178	185	191	198	204	211	217	223	230	236	242	249	255	
5'8"	118	125	131	138	144	151	158	164	171	177	184	190	197	203	210	216	223	230	236	243	249	256	262	
5'9"	122	128	135	142	149	155	162	169	176	182	189	196	203	209	216	223	230	236	243	250	257	263	270	
5'10"	126	132	139	146	153	160	167	174	181	188	195	202	209	216	222	229	236	243	250	257	264	271	278	
5'11"	129	136	143	150	157	165	172	179	186	193	200	208	215	222	229	236	243	250	257	265	272	279	286	
6'0"	132	140	147	154	162	169	177	184	191	199	206	213	221	228	235	242	250	258	265	272	279	287	294	
6'1"	136	144	151	159	166	174	182	189	197	204	212	219	227	235	242	250	257	265	272	280	288	295	302	
6'2"	141	148	155	163	171	179	186	194	202	210	218	225	233	241	249	256	264	272	280	287	295	303	311	
6'3"	144	152	160	168	176	184	192	200	208	216	224	232	240	248	256	264	272	279	287	295	303	311	319	
6'4"	148	156	164	172	180	189	197	205	213	221	230	238	246	254	263	271	279	287	295	304	312	320	328	
6'5"	151	160	168	176	185	193	202	210	218	227	235	244	252	261	269	277	286	294	303	311	319	328	336	
6'6"	155	164	172	181	190	198	207	216	224	233	241	250	259	267	276	284	293	302	310	319	328	336	345	
	Underweight (<18.5)	Healthy Weight (18.5-24.9)						Overweight (25-29.9)						Obese (≥ 30)										

Find your height along the left-hand column and look across the row until you find the number that is closest to your weight. The number at the top of that column identifies your BMI. The area shaded in blue represents healthy weight ranges. Chapter 8 describes how BMI correlates with disease risks. Source: National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, 1998.

Figure 3. Body Mass Index (BMI)

social, political and economic costs. The Body Mass Index (BMI) helps to determine a healthy body weight. (See **Figure 2.**)

Most health care practitioners use the BMI as one of the strongest predictors for health risks. (See **Figure 3.**) A BMI of 18.5–24.9 is the lowest level of health risks while 25–29.9 is indicative of overweight and high health risks such as cardiovascular disease, hypertension and diabetes. A BMI of 30-plus is considered obese and predicts very high health risks and morbidity. Conversely, a low BMI of less than 18.5 is indicative of health hazards. This includes low iron status, amenorrhea, low infertility and osteoporosis. It will take more than just physicians to intervene in helping patients to modify lifestyle behaviors. Estheticians are poised in society at this period of time to play a significant role in preventive care for obesity and its related health risks. The market is wide open for estheticians, but they need education and skills in this specialized area of work.

Note that obesity rates are high in the East and low on the West Coast. Does this infer that people on the West Coast live a healthier lifestyle? The highest rate of obesity was found in Mississippi, while the lowest rate was found in Colorado. Does the mountainous terrain encourage people to participate in regular physical activity? Many studies show a positive correlation between obesity and diabetes, a growing health concern in the past year. The results of the study by the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System considered variables such as sex, age, race, education and smoking status to show the relationship.⁵

The lowest rate of diabetes was found in Alaska. Does the cold temperature stimulate body metabolic rate or is it the fish diet of Omega 3 fatty acids that contributes toward the reduction of

diabetes? Note that although obesity rates were higher among males than females, the incidence of diabetes was higher among females. Obesity rates rose after age 40 and were highest from 50–59. Blacks and Hispanics were found to be more obese than other ethnic groups, but diabetes was highest among Blacks. Is it diet-related? Results suggested that the more educated were less likely to be obese than those who were less educated. Can this be interpreted that more information contribute toward a healthier lifestyle? Perhaps this is where the esthetician can inform and guide the client.

What causes obesity?

Causes of obesity are multifaceted and several theories have been proposed. Ultimately, obesity sets in when more kilocalories (kcal), or energy intake, have been ingested than energy expenditure. This leads to excess body weight. Some theories of obesity include:

1. **Genetics.** One can be predisposed to obesity genetically. Furthermore, if both parents are obese, there is an 80% chance of developing an obese child.
2. **Environmental causes.** This includes several variables.
 - A. *Social environment.* An environment where unhealthy foods are prepared will perpetuate itself in unhealthy eating habits in later life. One's eating habits are instilled during adolescence where food preparation and culture prevail. Peer pressure also affects eating habits.
 - B. *Socioeconomic status.* Many studies suggest that the lower the socioeconomic status, the higher the probability of poor eating behaviors.

Wellness can be defined as the active
pursuit of both mental and physical
health.

- C. *External cues.* Environmental cues such as the sight and smell of food affect eating behaviors.
- D. *Set Point Theory.* This theory is based on an internal body mechanism that denotes satiety, or fullness. Many individuals tend to ignore their natural set point and go beyond it, resulting in weight gain.
- E. *Sedentary lifestyle.* Since obesity rates continue to escalate despite available nutrition information, scientists are beginning to believe that the major factor causing obesity may not be from excess dietary fat intake, but perhaps the lack of physical activity found in Western societies. Modern lifestyle such as television and computers encourage a sedentary lifestyle, particularly among children. Recent phenomena of obesity cases in China and other developing countries has been attributed by some scientists to be the result of both a more sedentary lifestyle and availability to the fast foods now found in urban cities.

Somatotyping

One strategy to develop treatment programs for clients is to have an understanding of body types, or *somatotyping*. According to William Sheldon, an anthropologist and psychologist, people can be classified into three basic body types: *endomorph*, *mesomorph* and *ectomorph*. Each body type is genetically predetermined and associated with certain physiological characteristics. This is not a hard and tried science because some people may exhibit characteristics of more than one body type; for example, one can be a mesomorph in the upper body and an endomorph in the lower body. Some researchers find that body types respond differently to certain exercises and diet regimens. Therefore, if the body type is known, then the positive characteristics of that body type can be maximized, and the weaknesses minimized to attain a healthier and more attractive body.

Endomorphs. Endomorphs typically have a large, heavier, soft round body shape, thick waist and thighs, short limbs and rounded shoulders. This person's BMI is high, gains weight easily, has underdeveloped muscles, cellulite problems and low body metabolism. Famous endomorphs include Oprah Winfrey, Marilyn Monroe and Robin Williams. It is theorized that the endomorph

body type forms from the endoderm layer in the embryo and gives rise to the overdevelopment of internal organs including the digestive organs and subcutaneous tissues. Endomorphs therefore tend to have thicker adipose tissue and an overdeveloped digestive system, leading to overeating. The goal of the body therapist is to reduce the BMI by increasing the body metabolic rate.

Male endomorphs typically are found among middle-aged men who develop excess fat in the abdominal area—central obesity—and are referred as apple-shaped. They tend to practice unhealthy lifestyle behaviors such as poor diet, lack of physical activity, drinking and smoking. The female endomorph tends to have a pear-shaped body with body fat on the hips and thighs. Men tend to lose their abdominal fat with aerobic activity quicker because their fat is located closer to the body's surface than women where the fat is deeper in the subcutaneous tissues. The goal of the body therapist is to help the client lose weight gradually. Clinical treatments that help to improve the body metabolic rate (BMR) include steam/sauna, underwater massage, manual lymph drainage (MLD), gyratory massage (G5) and cellulite treatments.

Endomorphs need to increase aerobic activity to at least five to six times per week for a minimum of 30–45 minutes each session to burn fat. Weight training to increase lean body mass and reduce fat mass should be done two to three times per week. Nutritionally, endomorphs should concentrate on low fat, low-calorie foods and less meat but more healthy fats, such as Omega 3 fatty acids found in fish, and eat several small meals throughout the day instead of three large ones. Choose fresh, whole foods instead of processed foods because they contain more fiber and nutrients. In addition, endomorphs should eat less meat, drink more water to eliminate toxins, use herbs and avoid salt in

The goal in preventive body care is
to reduce major health risks by
maintaining a healthy body weight.

cooking as well as high sugary foods, and consume low glycemic index foods to sustain sugar levels and thus avoid overeating. Dietary supplements such as fiber, antioxidants such as vitamins A, C, E, selenium, CoQ10, chromium and a baby aspirin daily to reduce the risk of heart attacks is recommended, however clients should always consult with their physician first before changing dietary supplement intake.

Mesomorphs. This body type is the least likely to develop weight problems except for those males who develop central obesity in middle-age. The mesoderm layer in the embryo gives rise to increased muscle development. The mesomorph carries a healthy BMI and usually is muscular and athletic with a strong upper body, trim waist and good posture. However, the muscle mass can limit flexibility. Famous mesomorphs include Arnold Schwarzenegger and Demi Moore.

The goal is to maintain healthy body weight with continued healthy diet and exercise regimen. However, yoga and Pilates will help to improve flexibility. The mesomorph usually is health-conscious about food intake. Since they work out regularly, the daily protein intake should be higher than normal, 1.5 grams/kg. Dietary supplements should include whey/soy protein, CoQ10, zinc, chromium and zinc to prolong cellular energy. Clinical treatments should include water therapies such as underwater massage, sports massage and stress therapy to relax those tight-toned muscles.

Ectomorphs. The ectoderm in the embryo gives rise to the skin and nervous system, thus the ectomorph has a high nervous disposition and finds it difficult to relax. Characteristics of an ectomorph include a slender body with bony hips, long limbs, underweight with a bent-over posture, and a tendency to suffer from lower back problems. The BMI is low with a low iron status, menses, infertility problems and susceptibility to osteoporosis in later life. Due to high metabolism, the ectomorph has trouble putting on weight. Some famous ectomorphs include Jennifer Aniston and Tom Hanks.

Clinically, treatments for relaxation such as body massage, hydrotherapy and stress therapy are helpful. Where fitness is concerned, they should concentrate more on weight resistance rather than aerobic fitness to build lean body mass for increasing strength. Low sets and high repetitions using free weights are recommended, concentrating on squats, leg and chest press. More rest between sets is needed. Yoga and Pilates would improve back strength and flexibility. Nutritionally, they need to

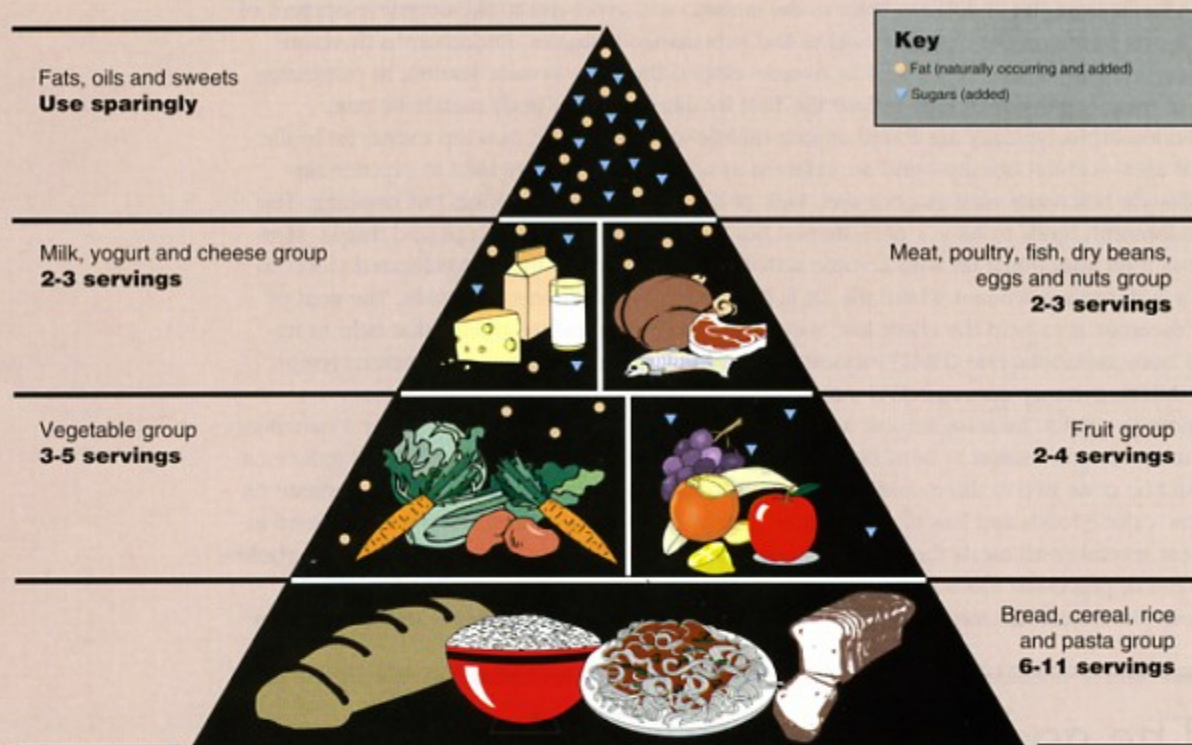


Figure 4. The Food Guide Pyramid.

eat more calories and good fats, such as Omega 3, 6, but also need some lean red meat for iron. High sugary foods that may contribute toward nervous metabolism should be noted. If they are vegetarian, alternative proteins such as soy foods, legumes and dietary supplements such as B12 must be taken to build up strength.

Implementing treatments

Body treatments such as body wraps and cellulite treatments can be enhanced with a program that incorporates nutrition, fitness and stress management. The cost of these treatments should include nutritional analysis, fitness assessment and clinical treatments. They can be offered as a series of body treatments for slimming, toning or weight management.

Balanced diet

Scientists have produced the Five Food Group Plan to help guide the country's population in daily dietary intake for a healthy population. (See **Figure 4.**) Using the food guide plan helps to ensure that the essential nutrients are eaten daily. However, it does not control healthy choices, so the therapist needs to guide clients in making healthier food choices by educating them. Provide photocopied handouts that list healthier foods together with the body care products that you recommend. Educate them on nutrient-dense foods such as those that contain optimal essential nutrients but minimum calories. For example, low fat milk gives the same protein values as whole milk with a minimum of fat and calories. Today, computer programs are available to balance the client's diet quickly. Most people will lose some weight if they reduce their caloric intake and increase physical activity. Researching foods for healthier choices actually will help you to learn about what nutrients are found in favorite foods and their nutrient values and this knowledge can be transferred to the client who will learn to choose healthier food choices.

Fitness and health

More fitness centers already are adding spa therapies to their program and, vice versa, spas are adding fitness programs to their services in order to achieve total mind and body wellness. Perhaps you already are performing a body wrap treatment that claims to lose inches or cellulite reduction, but by augmenting your body therapies with lifestyle management skills, you will add more credibility to your work and increase the client's respect for your professionalism. In other words, your body therapies are not just spa therapies for relaxation but also a holistic approach to body treatments.

Team up with a personal trainer to give a fitness assessment and conduct personalized training sessions. The trainer will need a consultation room, which must be considered in working out a fee structure. The fitness assessment is very important because it measures the percentage of body fat or excess body weight and creates a psychological need for weight reduction. Resistance training should form part of the fitness component because building muscle mass would decrease fat mass and increase strength and tone the body, thus reducing the risk of osteoporosis in later years. Aging baby boomers are no longer able to keep up with the step and aerobic classes and find that programs such as yoga and Pilates help to increase their strength and flexibility as well as deal with the inevitable daily stress in their lives. Some spas have successfully added just yoga and Pilates to their spa menus to enhance the wellness approach.

Costs involved

Certain costs must be worked out before promoting the weight management series of treatments.

1. **Consultation fee.** You may opt to include a charge for consultation because it takes much time to work out the nutritional analysis.
2. **Room cost.** If a room is used for the fitness assessment, the time allotted to use the room must be included in the cost of the series.
3. **Fitness assessment cost.** Include the cost of the personal trainer's time. The personal trainer can be on a per-call basis so you can set up appointments for each client.
4. **Nutritional assessment cost.** Don't forget that you had to acquire education and training for this work, and it should be built in your fees.
5. **Series of body treatments.** Therapy includes spa treatments using a combination of water therapies and body equipment as well as fitness, nutrition guidance and stress management. Offer a series for weight management at one specific fee with bi-weekly treatments to get good results.

Retail products

Devote one section of your reception area to retail products. For body therapies, design a showcase or counter attractively stocked with retail body products, particularly those that were used during the body treatments, such as aromatherapy body products, shower gels, loofah mitts and other body products that the spa carries. Display dietary supplements that will enhance the nutritional assessment, such as fiber for weight reduction, vitamins, minerals, enzymes and herbal products. CoQ10 and chromium piccolonate are examples of dietary supplements that help increase body metabolism. Sales of these products will result in higher profits and a better reputation for your spa as a holistic center. Ensure that educational literature on all products is available for your clients. Feature a video on your body treatments, nutrition and exercise to show in the reception area to stimulate inquiries about body therapies and related services. The more knowledge clients acquire, the more they will purchase.

You constantly must make clients aware of the dangers of being overweight and obese by having educational materials available to them. These materials should inform them of the importance of a body therapy program that includes a healthy diet, regular physical activity and use of your products to help combat overweight problems and prevent the dangers of obesity. Stress the words *preventive health care*. Remember, the statistics from the survey indicated that higher education was positively correlated to lower rates of obesity.

A lucrative component

True anti-aging body therapies in the form of weight management can prove to be a very lucrative component of body treatments in the spa. By practicing wellness yourself, you will serve as a role model to motivate clients and others around you. Wellness should be by choice, not by force. ■

References

- ¹ Galuska et al, Are health care professionals advising obese patients to lose weight? *Journal of American Medical Association*: 282:1576-78 (1999)
- ² Lam, P, *Practical Nutrition for the Health and Beauty Professional*, Self-published: Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 27 (1997)
- ³ Mokdad, AH et al, The Continuing Epidemics of Obesity and Diabetes in the United States, *Journal of American Medical Association*: 286:10, 1195-1200 (2001)
- ⁴ Oosting, C, www.bodybuilding.com
- ⁵ *The Journal of American Medical Association*, Prevalence of obesity among U.S. adults, www.jama.ama-assn.org