

Press release

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CUHK Releases Factors that Reduce the Risk of Rebound Weight Gain

As it is commonly known, overweight may cause a certain degree of inconvenience in daily life. It is also related to an increased risk of developing diseases such as hypertension, coronary heart disease, hypercholesterolemia, diabetes, cerebrovascular disease, gall bladder disease, arthritis, sleep apnea and some types of cancer. According to the data from the Department of Health in the last 5 years, an average of 15-20% of the population attempted to lose weight every year. However, the prevalence of overweight or obesity still remains high at 40%, which suggests that the weight loss methods employed by most of the people may not be effective, and that a rebound after weight loss is common.

In view of this, a telephone survey was conducted by the Centre for Nutritional Studies at The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) during 2008 and 2009. 602 subjects (454 female and 148 male, with mean age at 42.7 years old) were examined. It was found that 75.8% of the people are able to maintain their body weight for two years after their weight loss programmes, among which about 60% can keep up to three years or more. In average, people who have succeeded in losing weight are likely to regain 16.8% of their lost weight after 2.7 years.

The results showed that it is more effective to maintain weight through gaining knowledge on healthy lifestyle and nutrition than by way of taking weight reduction pills or surgery. Moreover, checking body weight on a regular basis and keeping a diet record are also the keys for maintaining a healthy weight. Furthermore, the results showed a more common trend of rebound in weight among people with limited physical activity throughout the weight loss period, and those who lose weight too quickly or switch jobs frequently.

In the last 3 years, the Centre has encouraged those who have completed weight loss programmes to return for follow-up visits once every 3 to 6 months so that nutritionists can better understand their current situation, including weight, body fat percentage, eating habits, physical activity level, health condition, psychological status etc. A more favorable weight maintenance result is found in those who visited nutritionists on a regular basis. Most of the interviewees also mentioned that a lack of professional monitoring can be one of the major reasons for weight rebound.

Dr. Mandy Sea, Manager of the Centre for Nutritional Studies, concluded, 'It is important to keep an eye on the body weight by weighing regularly after weight loss. Once you regain 5%-10% of the lost weight, you should start monitoring your daily eating habits and lifestyle. Persistent healthy eating habits and regular exercise pattern are the keys to a long term healthy weight.'