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Medically supervised weight management

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Supervised weight management is essential for safe and sustainable results. PICTURE CREDIT: FREEPIK

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A MULTIDISCIPLINARY, medically supervised approach to weight management will result in more effective outcomes that can be sustained in the long term. This is especially true for individuals with chronic conditions or mobility challenges.

According to the 2024 National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS), over half of Malaysian adults (52.1 per cent) experience abdominal obesity — a major risk factor for non-communicable diseases like heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

Among adolescents, only 5.2 per cent meet daily vegetable intake recommendations, while poor dietary habits and sedentary lifestyles remain widespread.

Obesity is a chronic medical condition that often hides other risks, says Bukit Tinggi Medical Centre (BTMC) consultant internal medicine physician Dr Nurul Nadiah Mohd Iqbal.

"When patients attempt drastic changes without understanding their health baseline, they can do more harm than good."

That is why supervised weight management, which considers each patient's medical profile, nutritional needs and physical condition, is essen-

tial for safe and sustainable results.

Medical supervision ensures that underlying health issues are identified and accounted for before patients embark on a weight loss programme.

For example, patients with prediabetes may require a different dietary strategy than those with thyroid conditions.



Dr Nurul Nadiah Mohd Iqbal. PICTURE CREDIT: BTMC



Dr Tamilvani Arumugam. PICTURE CREDIT: BTMC

"We begin with comprehensive blood tests and physical assessments to identify silent risk factors," explains Dr Nurul Nadiah.

These insights guide every step of the patient's personalised treatment plan, ensuring safer and more effective outcomes.

DIFFERENT ROADS TO WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

Every patient's journey is different, adds Bukit Tinggi Medical Centre consultant internal medicine Dr Tamilvani Arumugam.

"When medications are involved, they must be closely monitored to ensure effectiveness and to avoid side effects like fatigue, dehydration or nutrient imbalances."

Medical supervision plays a key role in reducing dropout rates, she adds, as ongoing follow-ups help patients sustain their efforts and address setbacks early.

When it comes to diet, rather than placing patients on strict or unfamiliar

diets, it's better to work with what they already know and love, explains Bukit Tinggi Medical Centre senior dietitian Rama Parahakaran.

"Food is cultural and emotional. We are not here to take that away; we help patients understand how to enjoy food more mindfully."

For instance, modifying a meal like nasi lemak might involve adjusting portion size, swapping coconut rice for a smaller portion of brown rice, or replacing fried anchovies with grilled chicken. Rather than avoiding favourite dishes, the goal is to train patients to make healthier choices consistently.



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Dr Nurul Nadiah Mohd Iqbal

This also includes teaching them how to read food labels, plan balanced meals, manage cravings and eat at regular intervals to prevent binge-eating behaviours.

GET MOVING

Physical activity is also a key part of weight management, but only when done safely.

Many patients with obesity experience knee pain, poor posture or balance issues.

Physiotherapists can carry out personalised strength and mobility assessments using artificial intelligence-assisted tools, allowing for precise and measurable progress.

"The goal is not just to increase activity, it is to rebuild function in a way that respects the patient's current limitations," says David Health Solutions (Asia) Sdn Bhd's rehabilitation centre physiotherapist and general manager Kiran Kaur.

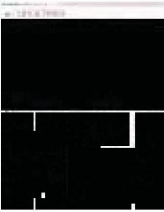
Patients should be guided through movements like spinal stabilisation or hip and shoulder exercises that ease joint strain while improving control and endurance.

These plans are adapted from session to session, allowing for gradual progression.

When someone who used to avoid stairs or long walks can eventually manage daily tasks without pain, that is a meaningful step forward, not just physically, but emotionally too.

While there is no one-size-fits-all solution to obesity, an integrated approach built on clinical care, cultural sensitivity and ongoing assessment can offer individuals a more realistic and sustainable path toward better health.

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SUMMARIES

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