

SEE YOUR DOCTOR

“Doctor, I’d like to talk with you about how I can lose weight”

(NAPSA)—Sounds like a good opening line for a visit to your physician if you’re overweight or obese, right? Well, despite the fact that 64 percent of Americans are overweight or obese, a new survey of overweight Americans shows that only seven percent have ever made an appointment specifically to discuss weight with their doctor.

The “Talking Weight Loss” survey, conducted by the Opinion Research Corporation, found that while 93 percent of overweight Americans acknowledge that excess weight can lead to serious health problems such as high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes, most feel these conditions won’t impact them personally. In fact, 63 percent of overweight Americans who have not discussed weight with their doctor say they haven’t done so because they don’t believe their weight is a serious problem.

A new Web site, www.talkingweightloss.com, can help get the conversation started by providing tips on talking to your doctor and a free weight loss self-assessment tool.

“The survey results illustrate a long-standing problem—lack of patient-doctor communication about the issue of weight loss. Basically, it’s a ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ mentality,” said Dr. Michael Doyle, medical director, Northpoite Health Center in Berkley, Michigan. “Patients struggle with associated health problems, but often fail to address the underlying problem—excess weight.”

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Take Edith Myers of Dallas. Edith knew her weight was a problem. Her physicians advised that the best way she could manage some of her health issues was by losing weight. Her cholesterol and blood pressure were high, and the excess weight was contributing to other physical problems such as added wear and tear on her knees. Edith knew about a prescription weight-loss medication, Xenical, and asked her doctor if it would be right for her.

Since Edith began her weight-loss effort, nearly 10 months ago, she has lost 90 pounds and has just 45 to go on the way to reaching her goal. Rather than giving up all of the foods she enjoyed, Edith says she now “eats like a skinny person.” When she wants a piece of cake, she has one—not the entire cake. With a proper diet, prescription medication and the help of her doctor, Edith has taken control of her eating and, in doing so, has improved her health and changed her life.

For many, being overweight remains something of a taboo topic. It’s embarrassing and often people find it difficult to discuss even with those they’re closest to. However, deciding to finally do

something about excess weight is a major step, and making an appointment with a physician can help get things off to a good start.

A physician will help determine an appropriate weight-loss method by asking about the patient’s weight-loss history and goals. He also will review treatment options ranging from diet and exercise to prescription weight-loss medications and even surgery.

Once the appointment is set, the next step is to prepare for the conversation. It’s easy to get nervous in the exam room, so be equipped with the information your doctor will likely want to discuss. It may be helpful to jot down a list of topics you want to cover and bring the list to the appointment. Following are some topics to consider before seeing the doctor:

- Identify a specific concern, such as the effect the weight has on your general health or appearance (example: I’m finding it difficult to get around, I’m out of breath just walking up a few steps).
- Establish goals, how much weight you want to lose or the health improvements you’d like to see (example: I’d like to get down to a size 12).
- Discuss weight-loss methods you’ve tried in the past and why they didn’t work (example: I’ve tried every fad diet, but always end up gaining back the weight and then some).

Remember, the doctor is there to help, so make the most out of the visit.