



November 21, 2015 – Grand Rapids, MI

## The Cause of Obesity: The Lack of Exercise

After reading Thursday's message, I'll bet you all saw this one coming. Together with taking in too many calories, we just move way too little and it costs us. I specifically made the title of Thursday's message "Muscle Aging" instead of "Aging Muscle." The reason is that our sedentary lifestyle causes the muscle to age faster than it should. The solution is exercise. Here's a partial list of what exercise does for skeletal muscle:

### **Better Blood Flow**

Regular exercise increases blood flow to the exercising muscles. That allows nutrients in and more important, waste products out. In addition, consistent exercise increases the number of capillaries to the working muscle; that's another way of getting waste products out. The bonus is that it not only does that in the exercising skeletal muscle, it increases blood vessels in the heart muscle as well.



### **Less Fat**

Regular exercise will reduce the intramuscular fat by using it as a fuel. By reducing the fat inside the muscle, it decreases the inflammation and the fat toxicity as well. That has a cascade of beneficial effects on hormone production and mitochondrial efficiency.

### **Larger Muscles**

Simply put, exercising muscle fibers are larger. That means they use more fuel all day long and thus, metabolism increases. Aerobic exercise and weight training both benefit the muscle. The effects are different, but both types are important. You don't have to run marathons or become a bodybuilder, you just have to consistently work as many muscle groups as you are able.

Can you completely stop the effects of muscle aging? No, there are changes within the muscles that don't seem to be preventable. But here's the thing: the tremendous loss of muscle mass experienced by the majority of Americans due to being sedentary can be reversed with regular exercise. That will increase their metabolic rate and help cure the obesity epidemic.

One more thing. Protein intake should increase over the age of 50 and especially over 70. Instead of the recommended 0.35 gram per pound, it should be closer to 1 gram per pound of body weight; doesn't matter whether it's from animal or vegetable sources. While the research on protein intake alone is not definitive, higher protein intake combined with exercise does help muscle retention and growth.

## The Bottom Line

If we were to summarize the causes of obesity discussed over the past two weeks, it's clear that the primary causes are that we eat too much, we don't make very healthy food choices, and we are just too sedentary. The solution? It will vary for each of us. We have to find our own way. What works for one person won't work for another. The critical factor is that we have to be consistent. That means it becomes our lifestyle. Not just to lose some weight, not just to walk or run a 5K once a year, but because it's who we are.

Again, just six words are the solution. Eat less. Eat better. Move more. Just find the specific way that works for you in your life.

What are you prepared to do today?

**Dr. Chet**

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