

Diet and exercise still key to weight loss

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RESEARCHERS have uncovered more reason to believe that properly-managed diet and exercise can help overweight, obese and severely-obese people lose weight, two studies have suggested.

The studies, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, show that behavioural changes can have a significant impact, in contrast to increasingly popular surgical interventions, such as gastric bypass procedures.

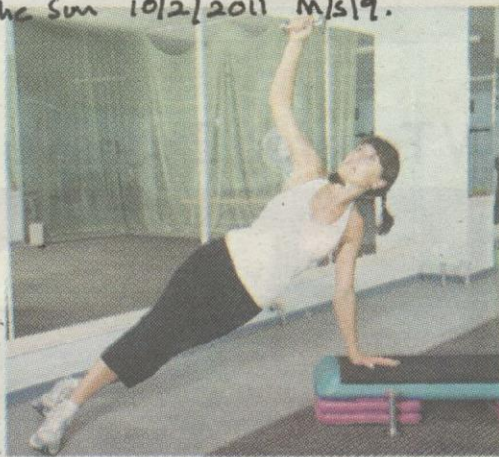
One study used the Jenny Craig weight-loss products. Led by Cheryl Rock of the Moores Cancer Centre in California and funded by Jenny Craig, researchers conducted a two-year trial of weight loss and maintenance among 442 overweight or obese women aged 18 to 69.

Their body mass index (BMI) – a measure of body fat based on height and weight – was 25 or higher. Normal BMI ranges from 18.5 to 24.9.

The subjects received in-person or telephone counselling as well as free, prepackaged foods and instructions for increased physical activity for 30 minutes a day, five days a week.

After two years, the average weight loss for women in the centre-based group was about 7kg or 7.9% of their initial body weight. The telephone-based group lost about 6kg or 6.8% of their weight.

Women in a control group received two individualised weight loss counselling sessions with a dietitian and



monthly counselling. They lost 2kg or 2.1% of their body weight.

By the end of the study, over 50% of participants in either the centre-based or telephone-based intervention groups had at least 5% weight loss, compared to 29% for the control group.

The researchers noted that even small weight changes can reduce the risk for cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

The second, intensive one-year study led by Bret Goodpaster of the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, reached similar conclusions.

It evaluated 130 severely-obese adult men and women without diabetes, randomly assigning them to either a group

that dieted and exercised for all 12 months, or another group with the same dietary intervention but with physical activity delayed for six months.

Exercise included walking briskly for up to 60 minutes for five days a week for a target of at least 10,000 steps a day. Participants also received small financial incentives to reach their goals, regular contact with a nutritionist and some free meals.

After six months, the group that began with the diet and physical activity lost more weight in the first six months than the group that delayed exercise – 11kg versus 8kg.

But by the end of the study, weight loss was nearly identical for both groups – nearly 12kg against 10kg.

The researchers noted that participants in both groups also had reduced waist circumference, blood pressure, insulin resistance, visceral abdominal fat and liver fat content.

“Intensive lifestyle interventions using a behaviour-based approach can result in clinically significant and meaningful weight loss and improvements in cardiometabolic risk factors in severely-obese persons,” they concluded, urging patients to incorporate exercise early in any weight loss programme. – AFP-Relaxnews