

[IMAGE]

Obesity: A Current and Future Concern for the Elderly

With obesity on the rise in the U.S., it's not surprising that it tops the list of future health concerns. And though the health community has focused on the consequences of obesity for years, little information exists concerning obesity's impact on the elderly. The U.S. population age 65 and older is predicted to rise substantially in the next 30 years. Because obesity is associated with increased health care costs and use, an increasingly obese elderly population may pose new challenges to the U.S. health care system.

A recent study set out "to estimate the prevalence of obesity in elderly Americans in 2010 and to discuss the health and economic implications of these estimates." Estimates were based on five nationally representative surveys of the adult U.S. population and population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau. Surveys included estimates from 1960-2000, in order to gauge changes in the prevalence and distribution of obesity over time. Obesity (body mass index of at least 30 kg/m²) was reported in 10-year age groups for men and women, beginning with age 20-29.

Researchers calculated the number of obese vs. normal weight adults ages 60 and older in 1990 and 2000. According to their calculations, 23.6% of elderly Americans were obese in 1990, compared with 32.0% in 2000. The number of normal weight seniors decreased during that same time period, from 38.2% in 1990 to 30.6% in 2000. The authors projected that by 2010, an estimated 37.4% of seniors will be obese, a statistic that has important implications for the health, quality of life and cost of care of this age group.

If you are concerned with healthy aging, now is the time to take steps to educate yourself and set your course for a healthier you. Losing weight, regular exercise and healthy eating are just a few steps you can take; other steps include massage therapy, adequate sleep and regular chiropractic treatments. Remember, it's never too late to change your habits for a longer, more fulfilling life. For more information on general health, visit www.chiroweb.com/find.

Reference:

Arterburn DE, Crane PK, Sullivan SD. The coming epidemic of obesity in elderly Americans. *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* November 2004;52(11):1907-12.

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