

Script – Broadcast – Decoding the underlying factors of obesity

INTRO

The music world was stunned to learn that the recent passing of former American Idol singer Mandisa was the result of complications from class III obesity. Mandisa, who was found in her Tennessee home in April, was 47.

Class III obesity is defined as a person that has a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or higher or a BMI of 35 or higher and experiencing obesity-related health conditions. In simple terms, BMI is a ratio of height to weight.

Obesity is a major problem in the U.S. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), it affects four out of 10 people in this country. Class III obesity is on the rise and affects 6% of adults nationwide.

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Nicole O'Neill, dietitian, OSF HealthCare

"We know the heavier we are, the higher risk we have for things like diabetes, like high blood pressure for acid reflux or sleep apnea, the things that actually are causing damage to our bodies." (:13)

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Ideally, a healthy BMI range is 18.5 to 24.9. However, body fat isn't the only factor of overall health. There's genetics, activity level, smoking, drinking alcohol and mental health that all have an impact on the chance of developing health problems.

There are dozens of health risks associated with obesity including Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke.

In addition to working with a dietitian, O'Neill encourages clients to seek other professional help such as counseling.

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O'Neill says the goal is to create a food plan that balances the calorie load. That includes coming up with well-balanced meals featuring plenty of fruits and vegetables, which have only 17 calories per ounce on average.

She adds that it's never too late to make healthy lifestyle changes. They can include slight lifestyle and diet modifications. And they don't have to happen all at once.

It can be small, incremental steps. For example, O'Neill says take one bottle of soda away and replace it with a glass of water. Replace one cheeseburger a week and add a salad. She says these are sustainable changes that feel doable.

People who think they could be helped by the new class of weight loss drugs should talk to their medical provider about the benefits in connection with a plan to make lifestyle changes.