

Obesity stigma - the hidden scars



OBESITY is no small issue in Malaysia. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), in 2019, Malaysia had the highest rate of obesity among Asian countries with 64% of males and 65% of the female population living with the condition. The physical complications of obesity are numerous, with cardiovascular disease, diabetes and various types of cancers only comprising a small part of it.

However, the issues of obesity bring more than just physical problems. The stigma surrounding obesity has begun to rise among citizens as well. According to a study published this year titled *Obesity, Stigma and Discrimination*, the obesity stigma affects the media, schools, workplaces and even in the healthcare sector.

Obese individuals are often the butt of jokes in mainstream media,

and overweight children are constantly being teased in school. Obese or overweight people are often depicted as lazy or stupid, and their weight is often implied to be their own fault – a sentiment that has repeatedly been proven wrong.

Moreover, healthcare professionals have been found to display biased attitudes towards obese patients. In the same study, it's shown that doctors with weight bias spend less time with, and offer less support and empathy towards their overweight patients.

As the stigma of obesity is everywhere, it's nearly impossible to miss, especially to those living with the condition. Obese individuals see reminders of their condition everywhere – and more jarringly, what their friends, family and community think of it.

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Customise weight loss desires with a slimming range

IT is important to be fit and healthy with a normal body weight and healthy body shape. However, it is tougher nowadays to achieve this due to poor diets, sedentary lifestyles and burgeoning exposure to toxins. Total Image understands the need for a healthy body and healthy body shape – hence, it is one of the first fewest companies to pioneer in the creation of natural and high-performance slimming products.

● Puri Cleanx – Cleanse first to maximise slimming efforts

With Total Image's range of slimming products, users can start by eliminating built-up toxins in the body through detox products such as Puri Cleanx. Total Image Puri Cleanx – formulated with natural ingredients including garcinia cambogia extract – helps to maximise weight loss efforts by improving metabolism and reducing body weight through detoxification. Those seeking to achieve a slender, slimmer and healthier body shape can continue with Total Image's slimming products such as S Body and S Tummy.

● S Body – Achieve an ideal S bodyline

Feeling fatigue and weak during the current weight loss programme? Try Total Image S Body. S Body provides a holistic approach to slimming at stubborn fat areas. It is formulated to reduce weight while nourishing the body,

making it safe for consumption.

● S Tummy – Reduce a waistline and bulging tummy naturally

Total Image S Tummy is specially formulated to reduce a user's waistline and bulging tummy. S Tummy contains five natural herb ingredients that work synergistically to achieve inches loss by helping to relieve gas accumulation, promote bowel movement, block the formation of fat cells and inhibit lipid accumulation.

● Beauty Dutox Tea – Start a spring clean, end food guilt with refreshing tea

Sip a cup of delicious, freshly brewed Beauty Dutox Tea daily after meals to spring clean the body. Beauty Dutox Tea comes in individual sachets for easy brewing, and is convenient to bring along anywhere as an alternative form for those who dislike a capsule or tablet form for detoxification. This five-in-one natural, herbal formulation refreshing tea is definitely a suitable choice after a heavy meal intake.

Total Image's range of slimming products is registered and approved by the Ministry of Health Malaysia to be safe for consumption, and certified halal by the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (Jakim) to be safe for consumption by Muslims. These products are suitable for men and women, and are available at all leading pharmacies nationwide. Consume daily according to the recommended dosage for at least three months to further enhance the benefits of the products. As the products are safe to be taken on a long-term basis, users may consume continuously as maintenance after a three-month course.

■ For more information, call Total Image Customer Hotline at 03-2276 1366 or email info@totalimage.com.my. This is a traditional formula. This should be taken with a balanced diet and regular exercise. This is a traditional product advertisement. KKLIU 0384/2019



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Health risks of being overweight

OBEISY is currently a prevalent condition among Malaysians. It is a multifactorial and complex condition which is characterised by excessive fat and leads to excess weight gain. Generally, obesity is classified according to the body mass index (BMI) and is calculated as: $BMI = \text{Weight (kg)} / \text{Height (sq m)}$.

There are also other ways to measure an individual's degree of overweight or obesity such as the body fat percentage or waist circumference (to measure abdominal fat levels). Usually, a body fat percentage of 25% or more in males and 35% or more in females is considered as obese and requires intervention to prevent other complications.

A study carried out among the Malaysian population by the National Institutes of Health Malaysia showed 52.6% of adults suffered abdominal obesity last year, higher than the 48.6% in 2015, while obesity prevalence in adults rose from 17.7% (or 3.3 million people) in 2015 to 19.7% last year. The percentage of overweight individuals also increased slightly from 30% in 2015 to 30.4% last year. This means that half of the adults in Malaysia are either overweight or obese as of last year.

Obesity by itself is a condition that needs to be addressed as it leads to various other medical conditions and lifestyle implications. Some of the medical conditions indirectly caused by obesity are:

- Hypertension
 - Type 2 diabetes mellitus
 - High cholesterol
 - Coronary heart disease, which leads to a heart attack
 - Obstructive sleep apnoea
 - Cardiac failure
 - Fatty liver disease
 - Gallstones
 - Stroke
 - Osteoarthritis of the knees due to excessive weight
 - Certain cancer conditions
- Besides developing into chronic illnesses



Dr Imran Khan Jallaldeen.

due to obesity, the quality of life of an obese patient is hampered by his difficulty in performing daily activities and the uptick in sedentary habits that will lead to more weight gain and increased morbidity.

One simple modification to lower a patient's overall weight is by cutting down his portion of daily intake which will indirectly reduce daily calorie intake and, hence, create an overall calorie deficit. In addition, freshly prepared food with high fibre should be included in his diet. A calorie deficit of 500 kilocalories (kcal) to 1,000kcal from the patient's total daily maintenance calories is needed for weight loss.

Moreover, it is recommended to drink six to eight glasses of water a day and make a habit of exercising in order to prevent obesity. Obese people can start exercising with a lower intensity during a shorter time period, then steadily and progressively increase the duration and intensity.

Weight loss clinics provide counselling to

Classifications of BMI	
Classification	BMI
Underweight	<18.5
Normal Weight	18.5 - 22.9
Overweight	>23
Pre-Obese	23 - 27.4
Obese-1	27.5 - 34.9
Obese-2	35 - 39.9
Obese-3	>40

The ideal weight loss should be about 0.5kg to 1kg a week over a six-month duration, says Dr Imran.

evaluate patients' eating habits and lifestyles that can be modified to reduce their weight. With the available health screenings and evaluations, any underlying illnesses causing excessive weight gain such as hypothyroidism or metabolic syndromes can be identified and quickly addressed.

Such changes would undoubtedly cause most patients to experience a significant amount of stress and demotivate them – therefore, it is suggested that they utilise some of the more common ways to manage or cope with stress such as meditation, relaxation techniques and even physical activity. Weight loss support groups will also help those with low self-confidence to overcome this mindset, besides offering more advice about sustainable methods for weight loss.

According to Dr Imran Khan Jallaldeen, MyHomeMedic Unit head at MSU Medical Centre, "A reasonable weight loss goal must be set up and the ideal weight loss should be about 0.5kg to 1kg a week over a

six-month duration. Losing a large amount of weight over a shorter period is considered dangerous to the patient's overall health and may cause rebound weight gain once the individual deviates from his weight loss routine (eating a very low number of calories during the weight loss phase, for example).


"It is vital to increase patients' knowledge regarding obesity and its complications, and provide awareness to others."

He adds, "Obesity is a chronic condition that will lead to various other medical conditions that could be detrimental to patients' health and may reduce their overall quality of life. Hence, modifications and interventions will be required to improve the quality of life and to prevent the development of conditions like hypertension, type 2 diabetes and so on.

"In Malaysia, the adult obesity rate is increasing alarmingly and needs to be addressed by all parties to build a healthier and fitter nation overall."


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Grappling with body-shaming

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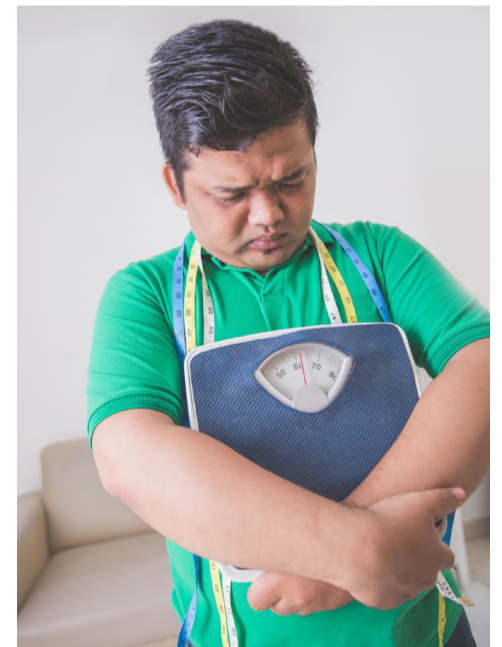
The weight of the stigma on people with obesity becomes apparent in their mental health. All stigmas are hurtful regardless of their type, and people who are constantly reminded that their obesity is something to be ashamed of and reviled begin to internalise it, believing that their condition is indeed rightly attacked and hated.

Obese individuals constantly exposed to the stigma commonly suffer from mental health issues such as depression, feelings of worthlessness, low self-esteem, poor body image and suicidal thoughts. A report by WHO indicates that such individuals often redirect the body-shaming and stereotypes onto themselves, joining others in the hatred and dissatisfaction of their own bodies.

In an ironic twist, the weight stigma has always had the opposite effect on people with obesity when it comes to their physical health and improving it. According to a 2018 article published in *Today's Dietitian* titled *The Health Impact of Weight Stigma*, the stigma has been intentionally used in healthcare centres and in society as a "motivator" for obese people to lose weight. However, those who have been shamed by their healthcare providers or have sensed the weight bias from their doctors are much more reluctant to return for their appointments, as they've lost trust in their doctors or have been hurt by them.

Additionally, those with obesity often face assumptions of bias from their healthcare providers, such as the belief that their health issues can purely be solved by losing weight. This leads to inaccurate consultations and diagnoses, and obese patients are often left believing that their doctors won't take them seriously due to their weight.

These factors combined create an unpleasant cocktail of hurt, mistrust and low self-worth for obese patients. They would then cancel further appointments and often avoid medical care altogether. Furthermore, many people with obesity cope with their



Continuous stigma surrounding obesity can negatively affect the mental health of individuals.

negative feelings by delving into self-destructive behaviour such as binge eating and not exercising, which results in them gaining even more weight than before.

Stigmas are never seen as good or helpful, regardless what form they may appear in. However, the stigma around weight has been widely accepted by society – even by obese individuals themselves.

Instead of encouragement and support, they're faced with judgement and mockery, some done in the guise of "motivating" them to live a healthier lifestyle. Would people want to live in a society where obese individuals have stopped believing in themselves because no one said they could? Would you? Think carefully about the answer.

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