

# Weight Loss – Could it *Be* More Difficult?<sup>1</sup>

The prevalence of obesity in the United States has nearly doubled in the past two decades, with nearly one-third of adults now suffering from obesity. An additional one-third of adults are overweight. Maintaining an appropriate weight through a healthy diet and regular physical activity has health benefits for all and, *really*, don't we all know what it takes to be weight-healthy? It just isn't a simple process! So it should be no surprise that individuals with serious mental illnesses (SMI) may face a challenge in achieving a healthy weight goal.

Solutions for Wellness (SFW) was created in 1998 to identify and promote physical health for people with SMI, and, clearly, weight control is one issue some people face. SFW contains information, strategies and tools intended to help those with serious mental illnesses follow through on a healthier lifestyle. This program was designed to aid patients in preventing weight gain and/or affecting weight loss, and it should be used in conjunction with other wellness resources, such as the <sup>2</sup>National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD) Morbidity and Mortality in People with Serious Illness report and the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) guidelines.<sup>1,2</sup>

One of the first ways to tackle weight issues is to determine if a patient has a problem with weight. SFW suggests using the NHLBI clinical guidelines to determine if a person is overweight or obese. These guidelines can be found on the NHLBI website, [www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov). Specifically, the NHLBI offers two tools for identification – checking waist circumference and Body Mass Index (BMI).

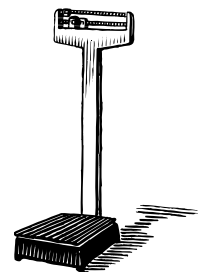
## Waist Circumference

Waist Circumference measures the fat located around the abdominal region. A measurement of more than 35 inches for women and 40 inches for men puts an individual at increased risk for developing obesity-related health problems.



## Body Mass Index (BMI)

BMI is a tool for indicating weight status in adults. It is a measurement of body fat based on both weight and height. Adults 20 years and older with a BMI of 25-29.9 are considered overweight. A BMI of 30 and above is obese.



Some standard strategies for weight loss include dietary therapy, physical activity, behavior therapy or a combination of all three. For those with SMI, however, a helpful motto often is “to go slower and take longer.” This “small steps approach” to developing healthier eating and physical activity patterns is utilized in the SFW program, which includes lifestyle therapy that combines changes in diet, exercise and behavioral strategies to help move people toward healthier lifestyle choices.

## References:

<sup>1</sup> Scheifler, P., Vreeland, B., Toto, A.M. 2009. Implementation Guide. *Solutions for Wellness*.

<sup>2</sup>National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD). Medical Directors Council. Morbidity and Mortality Report in People with Serious Mental Illness. Alexandria, VA. Mauer B.; ED., Parks J., Sverdsen D., Singer P., and Fioti M.E. October, 2006.

<sup>3</sup>National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI). Calculate Body Mass Index.

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/healthy-weight-basics/body-mass-index.htm>