

Understanding the Disease of Morbid Obesity

Patient Sensitivity

The background of the slide is a solid blue color. In the lower right quadrant, there are several faint, concentric circular patterns that resemble ripples in water, centered around a point. These patterns are light blue and fade out towards the bottom right corner.

What is Morbid Obesity?

- Morbid obesity is a disease that is determined by considering a person's Body Mass Index (BMI).
- Body Mass Index is calculated using a person's height and weight as part of the equation.
- It is an estimation of the fat content in the body.
- A patient with a BMI over 40 is considered morbidly obese.

The Obesity Epidemic

A Rapidly Expanding Problem

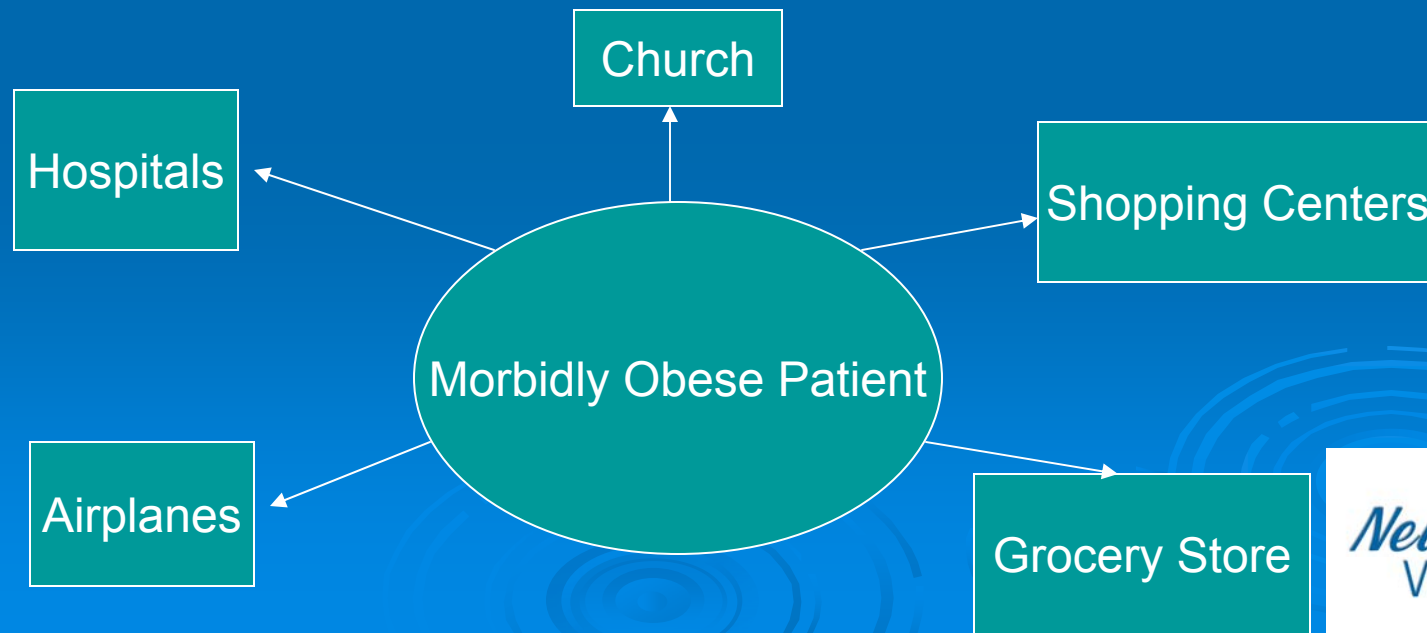
- Three in five Americans are either overweight or obese.
- In the past 20 years, adult obesity has doubled.
- There are 300,000+ premature deaths annually and the number is on the rise.
 - 400,000 deaths/year from smoking, but is decreasing
 - 90,000 deaths/year from colon and breast cancer combined
- 75% of obese children become morbidly obese adults.

Societal Views of Morbid Obesity

- Patients are often viewed as lazy.
- Patients are often thought to not have any will power or motivation.
- Many patients are blamed for their conditions.
- Patients are often discriminated against.

Discrimination

Discrimination can come from many places.
Patients are often ridiculed in public settings!
Think about where you have seen morbidly obese patients....



Causes of Morbid Obesity

Morbid obesity is not always related to a person's lifestyle or environment. Other causes of morbid obesity can be the result of:

Heredity

Hormonal

Gender

Societal

Socioeconomic

Behavioral

Morbid Obesity Can Cause Many Medical Conditions Including:

- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Depression
- Sleep apnea
- Cancer
- Joint problems
- And many others...

Cost of Morbid Obesity on Healthcare

- Conditions associated with morbid obesity often cost a lot of money to treat.
- The patients often require special equipment to adequately and safely care for them.
- Obesity related costs have been estimated at over 200 billion dollars per year. This includes, medical care, lost work, loss of productivity and hospitalizations.
- Obese patients (patients with a BMI greater than 30) spend an average of 37% more in healthcare costs per year than an average weight person.

Studies have shown that even in healthcare providers have negative and inaccurate opinions and knowledge about morbidly obese patients!

Physicians

- View obese persons as unintelligent, non-compliant, hostile, dishonest, unsuccessful, inactive, weak-willed.
- Prefer not to treat obese patients and do not expect success when responsible for their management.

Maddox & Liederman. Overweight as a social disability with medical implications. *J Med Educ.* 1969;44:214-220.

Nurses

- 48% are uncomfortable caring for obese patients.
- 31% would prefer not to care for an obese person at all.
- Rate noncompliance the most likely reason for the obese patient's inability to lose weight.

Maroney & Golub. Nurses' attitudes toward obese persons and certain ethnic groups. *Percep Mot Skills.* 1992;75:387-391.

Patient Perspective

More Comments from Morbidly Obese Patients...

“I do not go the physician’s office because I cannot fit in the chairs.”

“No one touches me, I am treated as if I have a contagious disease”.

“How many times do I have to hear, ‘Sorry, we cannot weigh you, you are too big’?”

“Have you ever worn a gown that does not fit and then you are asked to walk down the hall?”

Consequences of Insensitivity

- Obese people often shy away from doctors and hospitals because they are afraid of being embarrassed or humiliated by medical workers or their surroundings.
- 80% of surgery patients report being treated disrespectfully by medical professionals.
- Anti-fat attitudes among healthcare professionals affect clinical judgment and deter obese persons from seeking care.

How many patients have you seen that will NOT seek treatment because they are afraid of how they will be treated by healthcare professionals?

Examine Your Attitude

- **Be proactive mentally!**
Actively listen!
- **Be proactive physically!**
Touch the patient!
Maintain good eye contact!
- **Be genuine!**
Take time with the patient!
- **Be professional!**
Get assistive equipment if needed.