

HOW DO WE MOTIVATE THE OBESE MALE FOR TREATMENT?

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Overweight is as common in men as in women, and the android type of fatty tissue distribution (upper body obesity) is associated with serious health risks. For a number of years efforts have been made to inform the public of this in order to modify lifestyle. In spite of this, the male sex still accounts for a minority of the patients seeking treatment for overweight, usually below 15 pct. It is often difficult to motivate the overweight male for treatment without making him worried or frightened. This has undesirable consequences, not least if he fails to lose weight or if he regains weight later. In the clinic's material of 1,042 overweight patients, referred by their G.P., 204 were men (19.6 pct).

In 1993, people who wanted to lose weight were invited by a Copenhagen newspaper and the oluf mørk company to make a joint effort to be mentioned in the Guinness Book of World Records. The aim was for 200 persons to lose a total of 1 ton in one month, i.e. 5 kg per person. The program was a mandatory basis of formula diet (Nupo[®]) with a qualitatively free supplement of food and drink to the level of 4.6 mJ (1,100 kcal). The instruction was minimal: one initial 20 min. lesson with slides, given by a clinical dietitian.

Of the 167 persons that responded, 27 dropped out. Of the 140 that completed, 37 (26.4 pct) were men. Baseline BMI was 30.8 kg/m² (range 24.9-47.1) for the men, and 29.6 kg/m² (range 21.4 - 50.4) for the women.

RESULTS: Both in absolute and relative measures, the men lost significantly more weight (reduction in BMI: 2.5 kg/m², range 0.9-4.5) than the women (1.6 kg/m², range +1.8 - 3.6; p=0.0001). The men's whole attitude to the project was strikingly different from that of the women: They spontaneously contacted other male participants, kept themselves and each other currently informed of weight losses, wrote letters to the newspaper reproaching "bad losers", and frequently telephoned the dietitian and the company.

We suggest that in weight reduction programs for men appeal is made to such characteristics of male mentality as competitiveness, team spirit and desire for honorary reward.