What next?

1. We need to have more studies about weight in people with intellectual disabilities. As we learn more, we can work to make a bigger difference.

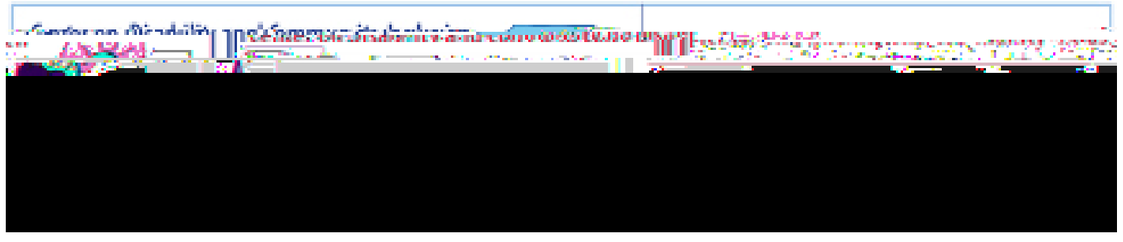
2. What works for one person may not work for another. Work with individuals to ýnd a plan to maintain a healthy weight and active life that ýts their interests and abilities.

3. Professionals should work towards raising more awareness and making information about diet and exercise choices available to everyone. Training and more involvement from families and caregivers is essential to helping individuals with Down syndrome and other intellectual disabilities.

Summary prepared by Jeanne Nauheimer of CDCI and Mattie Alpaugh of UVM

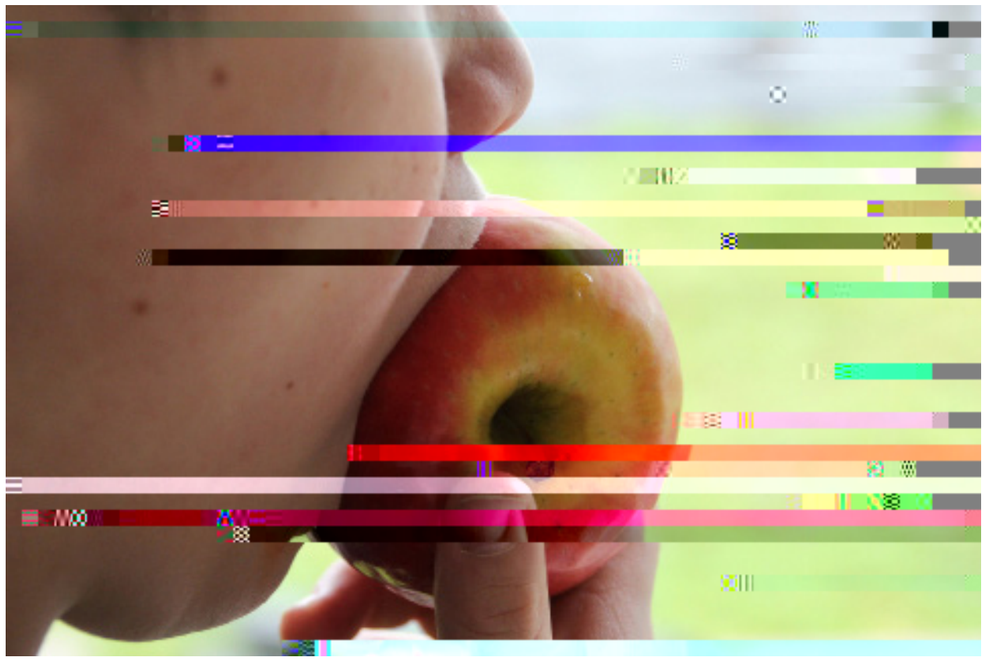
Source:

Wong, C., Dwyer, J., & Holland, M. (2014). Overcoming weight problems in adults with Down syndrome. (3), 109-119.



January 2017 Summary No. 4

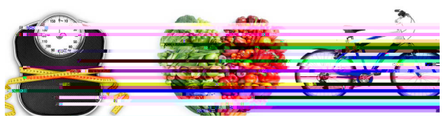
Name of Article:
Overcoming Weight Problems in Adults wiiClDown Syis wiiClDowC



EHLQMHLWRHEHMHDHLQRDWLRQERXWWKNLQRIXSRUWDW
ZOOKOSLQLYGDOZWRQHPHPDNHEHWWHGLHWDQHHLMFRLFHV

What does the research tell us?

People with Down syndrome are living longer, healthier lives than they were 30 years ago, but they still have to deal with some complicated health issues. Because of their genes, people with Down syndrome are more likely to be overweight, but just like anyone, other habits can contribute to being overweight. High weight puts people at risk for certain conditions, which include heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and cancer. Some lifestyle factors include poor diet and not a lot of physical activity.



The authors of this article found that people with Down syndrome often have other conditions that can make it harder to exercise and eat healthy foods. Individuals with Down syndrome have low muscle tone and may have other physical limitations that make it hard to do things like lift weights. Some people with Down syndrome also have a hard time with sights, smells, sounds, tastes, and textures. This can make it hard to eat certain foods.

As it is for all of us, more support means more success. People with more severe Intellectual Disabilities are less likely to be overweight because more of their food choices are made by family and professionals. Individuals with mild or moderate intellectual disabilities are living more independent lives and making their own choices about diet and physical activity. Individuals with Down syndrome and other intellectual disabilities, like many other people, donôt always choose health foods and physical activities. Sometimes people with Down syndrome and their caregivers donôt know what choices are healthy choices. Without knowing what the beneýts of exercise are or that what you eat can impact your health, it is very hard to make healthy choices.

Other things can also add to the risk of being overweight. A person with little money cannot afford some healthy foods. Adults with Down syndrome may be able to get help with buying food, but programs that do this are not always easy to use or understand. Not having a lot of money also means that access to gyms or recreational activities may be limited.

Estimated obesity in adults with Intellectual Disabilities:
Women: 39%
Men: 28%

What can we do today?

SEE A PROFESSIONAL

One of the best steps towards a healthier life is to see a professional, like a nutritionist or dietician, who can help with diet and food choices. These professionals can help keep track of health and weight. They can also help watch out for unhealthy eating habits.

DON'T DO IT ALONE

Another great idea is to involve families, friends, and caregivers! Health programs for individuals with Down syndrome and other intellectual disabilities are a good way to work on these habits. The authors included that the earlier you start working on these healthy habits, the more likely you are to be successful.

HEALTH SCREENINGS

It is important for everyone to go to a doctor for regular checkups. Some organizations like the Special Olympics also offer health screenings in areas including physical therapy, vision, nutrition, health, and well-being.

Get Involved!

- Start early with education for children and young adults
- Get to know the services offered in the community
- Take advantage of health promotion programs
- Advocate for standard Health and Wellness screenings.