Welcome to the Obesity Epidemic presentation. The purpose of this presentation is to provide the health and fitness professional with a brief overview on the obesity epidemic and its effects on society. After completing this section, the health and fitness professional will be able to define the difference between overweight and obesity, understand the reasons for the growth of obesity both domestically and internationally, and understand statistically how this epidemic has affected the adult and youth populations.

Being overweight or obese has been linked to chronic diseases such as heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke, and some forms of cancer. Obesity not only affects an individual's overall well-being and health, but it has a direct impact on the cost of health care in the United States.

The terms overweight and obesity are generally used to describe the degree to which an individual holds excess adipose, or fat tissue. Body mass index, or BMI, which is determined by dividing body weight in kilograms by height in meters squared, is a common method for categorizing individuals as normal weight, overweight, obese, or extreme obesity. One is considered to be of normal weight if they have a BMI from 18.5 to 24.9, overweight if they have a BMI from 25 to 29.9, obese if they have a BMI of from 30 to 39.9, and extreme obesity if their BMI is greater than or equal 40.

Weight control is a demonstration of energy balance-- a simple equation representing the relationship between energy intake and output. Obesity and overweight are the result of storing energy, or calories, which is consumed but not utilized in the body. Energy cannot be created or destroyed but is simply transformed from one form to another. Therefore, the main cause of excess stored body fat is due to a discrepancy between energy consumed, or food and drink, and energy expenditure, or physical activity. Simply put, if you eat more calories than you expend, weight gain will result. If you consume fewer calories than you expend, weight loss will result. If calories consumed are the same as expended, weight will remain stable.

One of the contributing factors for this discrepancy in energy balance is lack of physical activity due to advancements in technology. Over the last century, these conveniences include automobiles, machinery, computers, and other labor saving devices which have contributed to a changed workforce. Recent decades have seen an increase in time spent watching television, work and leisure computer usage, and electronic gaming. This has led to less activity and a decrease in energy expenditure.

The second contributor to the energy discrepancy is food consumption and the high food accessibility. Portion sizes have increased over the years, and they remain abundant. Fast and convenient foods are relatively low in cost, heavily promoted, and good tasting. While such foods are fast and convenient, they also tend to be high in fat, sugar, and calories. Choosing many foods from these areas can contribute to an excessive caloric intake. Couple this with a low amount of physical activity, and it's easy to see how obesity has grown to epidemic proportions.

In summary, the obesity epidemic has grown at an alarming rate among adults and children domestically and worldwide. With no end in sight, it is imperative that health and fitness professionals learn how to assist overweight and obese individuals with a multifaceted approach. This includes understanding the scope of the problem, factors that contribute to this epidemic, medical and physical challenges that are coupled with obesity, and how to communicate the correct information to clientele. When an overweight person loses weight, the impacts are often immeasurable, including a reduction in needed health care, increased job productivity, and an overall improvement in one's daily living. The health and fitness professional has the unique opportunity to truly change a person's life when he or she helps someone to reach a healthy weight.