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Thoughts from a hospital corridor – another reason to maintain a healthy weight

Saturday, March 28, 2015

DH & I are in Tennessee since his mother is in the hospital. She's 95 and in addition to the bladder infection (a frequent occurrence) she also has pneumonia.

She has always been a big, strong woman. In her middle years she was somewhat overweight, but it wasn't a concern. She was active and fit. The problem is, as is the case with many of us, the weight didn't remain stable, the pounds kept increasing year after year.

Eventually, it impacted her mobility. Knees, ankles and hips can only handle so much. Lack of mobility made the weight gain accelerate, a vicious cycle. Eventually, this led to an assisted living facility and a walker used for trips to the bathroom with help. Even that was unsustainable as time went on which resulted in frequent bladder infections.

As a rehabilitation therapist once told me when my mother was in his facility after a fall, "it's a lot easier to get a 140 pound woman back on her feet than a 280 pound woman."

Antibiotics should handle the infections, but you need VERY strong hospital personnel to handle a very large patient, one on each side.

My SIL, who is a doctor, has told me about the difficulties faced by the staff. They are on the front line of our obesity epidemic. Hospital equipment has been redesigned to accommodate larger patients, but daily care still requires personal, hands on treatment. These staff members face injury themselves as they strive to care for their patients.

Now I have learned that you have to be "evaluated" for rehab. If MIL is considered unable to ever be able to walk again (with a walker to the bathroom with assistance), the only option will be a nursing home. I know that at age 95 many will consider this inevitable.

However, she was always VERY strong. It was the weight that brought her down, literally. The last 10-15 years might have been very different if she had not kept gaining.

Mobility, for as long as we can, is one more reason to maintain our weight & a healthy lifestyle. How will we live our final years?

I know that there are no guarantees in life, but we owe it to ourselves and our families to give it our best shot.

Even if you haven't had success with weight loss, at least strive to stop gaining. Then you will know what your body really needs to stay right where it is and you can decide where to go from there.

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WILSONWR



Sorry I missed this yesterday. Your MIL is in my thoughts and prayers. Your blog really hit home for me. Keeping the weight off isn't just about being healthier, it's also about being able to do the active things you love as you get older. Thanks.

2263 days ago



KELLIEBEAN



I'm sorry about what everyone is going through. This strikes a chord in me with my own mom who passed away last year. She is the reason I have been working on my health the majority of my adult life and why I have kicked it up a notch the last three years to be strong and build endurance rather than focusing on the scale.

No matter our parents' age or history, it's never easy to see this happen. I'm sending you and your husband love and strength vibes!

2263 days ago



MILLEDGE2



Thank you for this thoughtful post. It is a sobering reminder of how important this issue is. Even if we aren't getting the cosmetic benefits we long for, because after awhile those are difficult for an aging body to achieve, we still have a critical reason to stay on top of our weight, strength, and general mobility.

My own mother was always VERY proud that she did not have large thighs, even in old age. Sadly, this was more of a representation of how weak her legs were than anything else. When her apple-shaped body gained weight, the simple physics of her getting out of a chair became a serious problem. I try to remember that every day!

2263 days ago



JAMIRBLAZE



Well Said!

My mother is like this. At 66, her mobility is severely impacted by her weight and will continue to be so unless she makes a radical change. I couldn't even get her to lose some when she had to have her knees replaced in the argument that it would make recovery faster (and she loathes hospitals).

She's a good reminder as to why I need to work hard at maintenance. Thanks!

2264 days ago



BETH4SUCCESS



Thank you for posting. It made me think of a lot of things I haven't thought of before. I love the older spark friends describing how they decided to work on being healthier, and I laugh that my 45 yr. old self was using age (I thought: this is just the way I am now) as one of many excuses before I finally got going on my own goals.

2265 days ago



SPINNINGJW



Having worked in Health Care for the past 10+ years, I would agree that patients are getting fatter. Most equipment used to go up to 300# and that was sufficient, now the "bariatric" equipment goes to 600#. It is sad.

I hope your MIL gets the help she needs and is able to get back to whatever "normal" life she had prior to this hospitalization. Maybe she will see that her weight is a contributing factor and try to do something about it.

2265 days ago



1STBUCKETITEM



Well Said!

Being a caregiver for Mom for almost 9 years, I unfortunately piled on the weight and went to my max. She passed away in June of 2012 two weeks after her 91st Birthday. Last May I finally said enough is enough! It's time for me! I have been determined to get to my goal by June 2015. I know Mom is smilin' and is proud of me. As of this week, I've lost 100 lbs. since May 5, 2014. Just another 28 pounds to get rid of by the middle of June! It's going to be close, but I know

I CAN DO IT !!

P.S. Mom was always a petite, Irish joy to be around!
2265 days ago



THROOPER62



2265 days ago



MARYJEANSL

Situations like your mil's are so very sad. My ex-husband's uncle, who was morbidly obese and then some, for essentially all his adult life, recently died in his mid-70s. He was miserable from multiple health issues for at least the last 20 years. It was so sad, the more so as everyone in the family loved him.

In contrast, my own mother, who is 93, is still able to live in her own home, though with assistance because she has Alzheimer's. She is still able to go up and down stairs! Why? Because she was careful (not to say obsessed) to keep her weight down. She is about 5'0" now, but was 5'2" before osteoporosis. She never weighed more than 110 pounds. She's a bit heavier now, since the Alzheimer's makes her not recognize hunger signals, and she forgets whether she has eaten. But even yet she is only about 120 pounds. Not only that, but she never had to have a hip or knee replaced, because her joints never had to deal with too much weight.

A great lesson for me...
2265 days ago

Comment edited on: 3/29/2015 4:30:54 PM



1CRAZYDOG

Thank you for sharing this -- just one more HUGE reason it's so important to maintain as healthy a lifestyle as possible.

Blessings to you as you go thru this. My Mom fell and broke her hip. Has been n rehab since 2-28. Has Alzheimer's as well. That is another issue that adds a layer of complexity to caring for a patient . . . to say the least!

Good luck.
2266 days ago



HARROWJET

This is a very important eye-opener. Thank you.
2266 days ago



CD15068443



2266 days ago



DOVESEYES



2266 days ago



_LINDA

When I went for my first knee replacement, the Dr. said he would not operate unless I lost the weight. I was about 60 lbs overweight. He said he tells this to all his patients because one time a woman regained her weight and damaged bother her kneecaps and blamed it on poor surgery. And yet I see other Dr.'s operating on morbidly obese people, replacing their joints. I think the first Dr. had it right. Obese patients have high risks in surgery never mind just the problem of lifting them. But I am guessing they would scream they have the right to health care the same as everyone else. It would be like refusing a smoker lung or cancer surgery. We can't force a person to lead a healthy lifestyle and look after themselves. The government can't legislate it into existence. The tobacco and junk food industries are too strong. A shame. It has to begin at the grassroots level. Like here on Sparkpeople. Lets hope it keeps catching on.
2266 days ago

Comment edited on: 3/28/2015 4:08:13 PM



ONEKIDSMOM

A very important message! Thank you for using your experience as a lesson for all of us!



2266 days ago





GINIEMIE

As a volunteer, with right arm/hand paralysis Erik cannot push wheel chairs of obese patients. This is a said reminder that the quality of your care can be impeded by your size. A very good reminder to STOP THE GIRTH GROWTH!

Praying for God's healing for your MIL.



2266 days ago



SLENDERELLA61

I hadn't even thought about obesity in this light. Thanks.

2266 days ago



PHOENIX1949

THANK YOU!

I will print this out and place in my 'food for thought' binder that I look through ever so often for reminders of why I am working on this.

SPECIAL FRIEND

PS - When I was 80 pounds light than now, I had a Doctor I was referred to for surgery look me right in the eye and emphatically state 'I don't do fat people.'

2266 days ago



JANETRW50

My mother spent most of her adult life struggling with her weight but after awhile she gave in to it. As a result of her growing obesity she became diabetic, had congestive heart failure and other ailments. She had endless UTI's that always had to be treated with IV antibiotics. If she fell, which she did a couple of times, I had to call the fire department to get her up. When she finally went into the nursing home she had to be lifted mechanically. It was painful for her and for me. I think for her and maybe others, obesity creates a downward spiral that is hard to break out of. There was a time that she could have slowed the spiral. No one needs to butter their bagel before they slather on the cream cheese. But she was stubborn and she gave up. It was sad and at the same time maddening. I miss her.

2266 days ago



WUMPASTAR

Thanks a lot for the blog. I hope she gets better.

I agree 100% with you. I think when it comes to weight loss and health a lot of people think very short-term and not very long-term. Sometimes people ask me why I exercise and when I talk about being healthier and fitter when I'll be over 50 years of age, they act surprised because I'm only 25. But I'd rather do that workout today and then not regret anything in 25 more years... because then even though it's not completely too late, it still is a little!

2266 days ago



PHEBESS

Hugs to you as the family tries to help out with your MIL - I know it isn't easy. My mom was in a care facility for Alzheimer's, but eventually walking was too painful as the disease started to affect her spine and legs. And yes, there were constant infections and a struggle with moving her due to her size.

Hang in there.

And yes, it reminds us all to stay fit, active, and at least not gaining, as you say!

2266 days ago



PATRICIA-CR

I Agree Well Said! AWESOME

2266 days ago



RASPBERRY56

I am so sorry for what you are going through with your MIL - may we all learn from cautionary tales such as yours (whether one is a Sparker or not).....



2266 days ago



CD4114015

What an

AWESOME AWESOME

blog today! I totally agree and do know how awful being grotesquely



overweight is on joints and bodies! And the change in medical equipment today to accommodate 400 lb patients needing cat-scans etc. And yet, food companies continue to only think about \$\$\$ it is a very sad world, indeed!

I am happy to say that HEALTH was my main motivator in my journey here and I have arrived first

time in many, many years so I plan to HANG onto it. Gaining weight is NOT "inevitable!" 🤗



2266 days ago



ALICIA363

THANK YOU!

2266 days ago



WATERMELLEN

When I went for thumb joint replacement surgery at an ortho out-patient clinic in about 2007, the nurse weighing me in (for purposes of anaesthesia calculation) told me frankly that I was the only "normal weight" person she'd seen that day; and most of the patients in the waiting room were there for hip/knee surgeries. Yup, all huge and huger.

When I was discharged as a breast cancer patient officially (5 years all clear May 2014) the nurse congratulated me on sustaining the weight optimal to prevent estrogen-positive breast cancer recurrence. She told me that almost none of their patients in my situation do that. (Of course ironically I had a recurrence scare in December . . . but it turned out OK!! And yup, maybe because I HAD kept the weight off, dunno, but at least I didn't have that to blame myself about while I was waiting for the testing!!)

We're going to get old. We don't want to end our days immobile because of weight gain that we could have prevented.

Your message today is a profoundly important one: and despite all my ridiculous frivolities about leather pants and cute boots, it's the health issues that sustain my motivation day after day after day!!

2266 days ago



DR1939

Well Said!

2266 days ago



MISCHAKEO

This article was a good reminder. Obesity can definitely bring many health problems as we age. I hope your MIL is doing better..sending prayers and hugs. My mom was not overweight and is 95. She is unable to walk unassisted. She kept her weight down, but lacked strength training.



2266 days ago



TCANNO

I can only wish you luck and hope.

I don't know how this will end but these people are fighters and get over thing that we would not.

Trev

2266 days ago



HOLLYM48

As a hospital employee, I can not agree with you more. It is a problem, not only for the patient but for the health care worker that is trying to move or transfer, reposition the patient, it is hard on all of the people involved because the patient is just lying there and moving from one bed to a gurney to a table etc.. is painful. We do owe it to ourselves to strive for the best health and weight possible because growing old is already hard, add weighing too much to that and it gets harder by the day.

Best of luck with your mil, I pray it all works out.

2266 days ago



SKB329

Thank you for this article. I am a retired nurse and have worked with overweight people. in fact, at the hospital where i worked, we had a room converted to accommodate the needs of obese patients. They need special wheelchairs, commodes, wider doorways and beds and special hydrolic lifts and scales. Obese folks struggle greatly with day to day activities especially hygiene and moving about. Your suggestions to lessen weight gain are right on, and this is one of the main reason that I have adopted the SP lifestyle.

2266 days ago

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