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MEDIA RELEASE

18 April 2006

Fat busters, surgery and lifestyle: treatment options for obesity

People who use medicines to lose weight still need to change their lifestyle. Modifying eating patterns and increasing exercise are a vital part of all weight loss strategies, according to Professor Ian Caterson of the Human Nutrition Unit, University of Sydney, writing in the latest issue of *Australian Prescriber*.

In Australia approximately 20% of adults are obese. Two in three adult males and one in two females are overweight or obese, and 14-18% of Australian children are overweight.

The evidence is clear that even small weight losses help prevent diabetes, heart disease and conditions. Weight loss also improves mobility, sleep and general wellbeing.

Professor Caterson says, "Those who maintain weight loss over the long term do so with a reduction in fat intake. Other diets such as low GI diet and the low carbohydrate high protein diets are also effective, but mainly appear to work by increasing the feeling of fullness and reducing intake".

There are currently a number of medicines to assist with weight loss, such as orlistat and sibutramine. These medicines work differently but still must be used in conjunction with lifestyle changes and diet to be effective. As these drugs have side effects their use should first be discussed with a doctor or pharmacist.

"When medicines are stopped some weight will be regained. This regain generally results in the weight increasing to the weight that could have been achieved by effective lifestyle changes alone", says Professor Caterson.

Surgery is an effective treatment for obesity and studies have shown that significant weight loss can be produced and maintained. Once again, for any surgical procedure to be effective in the long term it must be coupled with an ongoing weight loss and lifestyle program.

For the complete article visit the Australian Prescriber website www.australianprescriber.com. Australian Prescriber is an independent peer-reviewed journal providing critical commentary on therapeutic topics for health professionals. It is published by National Prescribing Service Limited (NPS), an independent, non-profit organisation funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

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