

UT Southwestern develops medically supervised liquid diet program

DALLAS – Feb. 5, 2009 – UT Southwestern Medical Center’s bariatric program has developed a medically supervised program using a specially designed liquid protein diet for people looking to lose weight with or without surgery.

The weight-loss program is available to those seeking to lose anywhere from 10 pounds to more than 100 pounds safely. It is based on a severe calorie-restricted diet and monitored by physicians and registered dietitians.

“It’s not safe to go on a diet like this by yourself. It could be very dangerous,” said Rosemary Son, a registered dietitian and faculty associate with UT Southwestern’s Clinical Center for the Surgical Management of Obesity. “It’s absolutely essential that you get enough protein and enough vitamins, which is not necessarily what all protein shakes on the grocery shelf provide.”

In addition, the Food and Drug Administration recently issued alerts about more than 25 over-the-counter products marketed for weight loss that contained undeclared, active pharmaceutical ingredients it said could put consumers’ health at risk. The various tainted products contained controlled substances, a drug not approved for marketing in the U.S., anti-seizure medication and a suspected cancer-causing agent, according to the [FDA’s alert](#).

“Studies continue to show that successful, long-term weight loss is difficult to achieve,” said Dr. Edward Livingston, chief of GI/endocrine surgery at UT Southwestern and director of the Clinical Center for the Surgical Management of Obesity. “A medically supervised program can help ensure you accomplish your goals safely and effectively, whether you are considering surgery or hoping to avoid it.”

The medically supervised diet contains about 800 calories per day – the equivalent of about four slices of pizza – and consists of a specially designed protein powder that dissolves in water, milk, tea, yogurt and similar products. No other food is consumed initially, although after a certain period some vegetables and other foods can be added.

“Physician supervision is essential due to the drastic calorie restrictions,” Ms. Son said. “If patients stay on it long enough, their appetite is suppressed. It’s pretty hard for about a week. Once they get through the wash-out period, they’re very motivated.”

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Program participants are seen by a dietitian or physician each week to help monitor their health. Measurements including weight and fat distribution are taken with a special body composition analyzer and reviewed at each meeting. In addition, support groups are offered and dieticians provide counseling to educate participants and help them adopt a more sensible eating plan after the desired weight loss is attained.

“How it should work is that you go to the extreme at the beginning, and then you get back to real food where you’re learning how to behave, have a good diet, how to make sensible meals and so on,” Ms. Son said.

The bariatric surgeons developed the program because bariatric surgery candidates often are required by insurance to follow a dietary plan for at least six months before surgery. In addition, research by UT Southwestern bariatric surgeons shows that losing pounds before weight-loss surgery can help reduce the time spent in the operating room.

UT Southwestern offers free monthly 90-minute education sessions for potential bariatric surgery patients the first and third Thursdays of each month.

Those interested in the diet program or bariatric surgery can call 214-645-2900 for information.

Visit <http://www.utsouthwestern.org/surgery> to learn more about UT Southwestern’s clinical services in surgery.

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