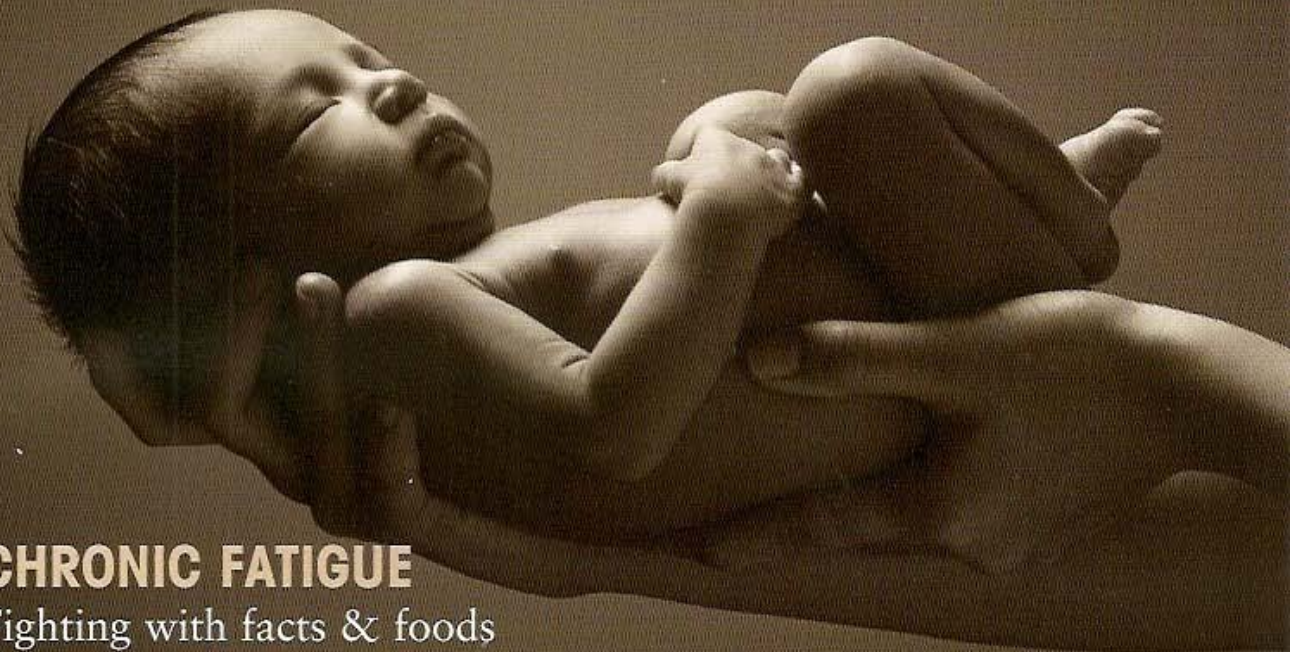


A PHARMACY NEWS PUBLICATION

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For Pharmacy Assistants



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WIN!
FREEBIES
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Portion control

By Amanda Clark

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Amanda Clark is an Advanced accredited practising dietitian and author of *Portion Perfection: A visual weight control plan* available at www.greatideas.net.au

Consumers who are overweight or obese are more likely to experience multiple health problems which require medications. This may expose them to regular contact with their local pharmacy.

Pharmacies are businesses with overheads and are not usually reimbursed for providing advice. For pharmacies to offer weight loss advice, the compensation needs to come from product sales or prescriptions, hence the prevalence of pharmacy based meal replacement programs.

While pharmacists are known to be well respected health professionals, it is rarely the pharmacist providing weight loss advice to customers and these programs have attracted criticism for the quality of the weight loss advice and hence the training of the pharmacy assistants.

There are over 30 meal replacement products in the pharmacy market with varying amounts of training provided to pharmacy staff.

While popularity of meal replacement

programs remains high indicating the appeal of a simple, straightforward solution, there is however, a growing number of people who have failed these programs. So maybe it is time to rethink how the products are used and what pharmacies can offer this significant population segment.

Below you will find my professional opinions and innovative ideas on how your pharmacy can really help overweight customers.

Program flexibility

All meal replacement programs work in the short term because they supply less calories than the average person burns in a day. Most of these programs include a "perfect" daily food intake including one ideal meal and two meal replacement products.

The failure or dropout rate is high due to lack of flexibility in the regime. Long term change to habits is likely to be low due to lack of a practical and useable educational component in the program. Most people already know that they can lose weight if they eat "perfectly" all the time, but they don't know how to live their usual life and eat their favourite foods in a way that will result in sustainable weight loss.

Inability to stick with the regime creates a feeling of inadequacy and guilt, and it is possible that the higher the level of contact

by pharmacy staff supporting that customer, the less likely they may be to return to the same pharmacy if they feel they have failed their program.

Perhaps now is the time to introduce flexibility into programs where this has not been intended. Meal replacement companies are unlikely to write in "food only" phases to their program because the goal is to sell product. This is an opportunity for the pharmacy to manage their own customers by suggesting they use these products differently.

Perhaps intermittent or cyclical use of meal replacement products with application of portion control to everyday life will result in lower failure rates, less guilt, greater customer retention and healthier attitudes to what to eat beyond the diet phase.

Advice for assistants

There are several programs such as those offered by Smartshape.com.au which provide suitable education. The Guild also offers a starter kit for weight loss and health screening services in community pharmacy. Go to www.guild.org.au/weightloss (members section) to find promotional materials and planning templates along with simple advice lists.

The best advice is to stay within your level of competence and refer on to further

Table 1: Weight loss tools

Tools	Diet books	Healthy cookbooks
Portion perfection plates and bowls	Portion Perfection	Peter Howard's Delicious Entertaining
Pedometers / accelerometers	Allan Borushek's Calorie, Fat & Carbohydrate Counter	Catherine Saxelby's Zest
Resistance bands	Sister Secrets (diffitness)	Aust Inst of Sport's Survival cookbooks
Bathroom scales	CSIRO Wellbeing diet	Annette Sym's Symply Too Good to Be True cookbooks
Exercise DVDs	Low GI Diet	Heart Foundation Cookbooks

Table 2: Criteria for everyday snack foods

From *Portion Perfection – A visual weight control plan* by Amanda Clark

1. Select food serves of approx 100 Cals (420kj)
2. Assess against the following criteria for everyday intake.

Snack Food	Fat (g)	Sat Fat (g)	Low GI/wholegrain/ fruit	Fibre (g)	Salt (mg)
Milk, yoghurt, dessert	<3		<20		
Cheese snacks	<6				
Biscuits		<3	Meets 1		<200
Bars	<3.5	<1	<5 if no fruit <15 with fruit	>1	

reading. Ensure you have knowledge regarding the various dietary products stocked by your pharmacy and can refer customers to reputable books and recipe books to meet their needs. To ensure credibility in this market it is important that the pharmacy stock only reputable information.

Innovative ideas

- Education on portion control is simple and quick using a portion control tool that commonly results in a sale and is easily applied in daily life. The Portion Perfection Plate conveys three simple messages:

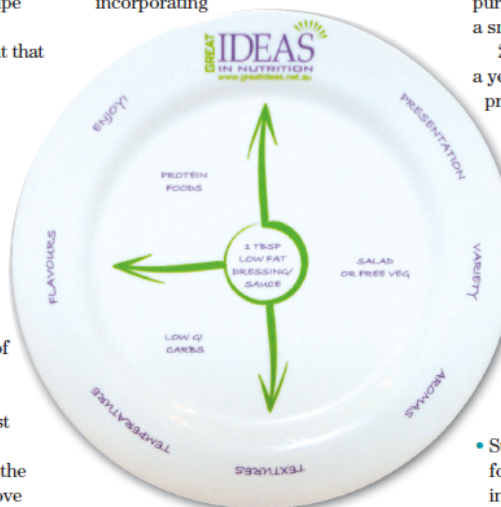
1. Nutritional balance – By filling of your dinner plate with protein, with carbohydrate and with salad or low starch vegetables, you will get the best nutritional balance for the meal.

2. Portion control – By filling only the base of the plate, 2cm deep in the above manner you will achieve approx 350- Cals (1470kj) which is the ideal energy intake for women aiming to lose weight. By filling to the edge in a similar manner will provide 450 Cals (1890 kj) which is the right amount for women aiming to maintain weight or men aiming to lose weight.

3. Conscious eating – By paying attention to all the attributes of the meal (guided by the words around the edge of the plate) you will slow down the rate of eating

and feel satisfied on a smaller quantity of food

- Combine a meal replacement product incorporating



portion control strategies that will carry over to the food only component. Betty Baxter (www.bettybaxter.com.au) is one such program, and the only one to get the "nutritional thumbs up" in a Choice review. See their user guide for the program details.

- Get involved with your local experts:
 1. Contract a local exercise physiologist

to take walking or exercise groups from your store around town. Give free tickets to those who make qualifying amounts of purchases during the week and charge a small fee for others.

2. Hold health screenings once or twice a year by contracting your local accredited practising dietitian (find them at www.daa.asn.au and click on 'Find an APD'). Again, give free tickets with eligible sales – you might notice more customers switching their prescriptions to your pharmacy because of your add on value. Ensure screening times are appointed so your APD is fully employed.

3. Talk to those experts about what products you could stock to support their practice.

- Stock only healthy cookbooks and tools for a healthy lifestyle such as those listed in table 1 so that you are seen to be a reliable source of good quality assistance.

- Stock healthy packaged snack foods. This aim would require that the pharmacy be discerning in the packaged foods that they do stock to develop a level of trust amongst the consumers. Suitable products are displayed under the everyday category in *Portion Perfection* and contain 100 Calories (420kj) per serve and meet the nutritional criteria in table 2.