

Presentation of weight loss

Aetiology of weight loss:

- Appetite maintained:
 - DM,
 - Hyperthyroidism
 - Malabsorption
 - Pheochromocytoma
- Appetite suppressed:
 - Malignancy
 - Severe cardio or respiratory failure
 - Gut failure
 - Depression
 - HIV

History in weight loss:

- History of presenting complaint
 - Amount and duration of weight loss
 - Any intentional weight loss?
 - Dietary changes
 - Calorie intake
 - ALARMS symptoms (see Dysphagia) and other cancer red flags
 - Full systems review
 - Systemic symptoms – night sweats
 - Psychological history – number of diets, any previous eating disorders, weight fluctuations
- Past medical history
 - See list of causes
- Medications
 - Appetite suppressants (including over-the-counter drugs)
- Family history
 - Cancer
 - Eating disorders
- Social history
 - Smoking
 - Travel history
 - Risk factors for HIV

Examination of weight loss:

- Cachexia
- Lymphadenopathy
- Abdominal masses
- Evidence of cardio or respiratory failure
- Signs of hyperthyroidism

Initial management of weight loss:

- Subjective global assessment
- Skin fold thickness
- BMI

- Blood tests:
 - FBC, U&E, LFT, TFT, clotting (for vitamin K)
 - B12, vitamin D
 - Cortisol and SST
 - Tumour markers
 - Coeliac antibodies
- Treat cause

Further management of weight loss:

- If feeding supplementation needed then start with oral route if GIT working
 - Give thiamine first (to prevent refeeding syndrome)
- Watch for refeeding
- Parenteral nutrition

Common questions concerning weight loss:

What are the common causes of weight loss?

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