

Midsection Course Corrections

HELLO, EVERYONE. I hope that the arrival of spring has inspired you to “break out” the clubs, or jump onto the treadmill, or walk a couple of extra miles a day, or to do some other type of physical activity that helps to work off the few extra pounds you might have gained during the winter. Of course, you are much better off if you have established an exercise program that you adhere to, regardless of the season.

I have noticed that if I am not careful, my trousers seem to get a little tighter during the winter months. It is very easy to blame the dry cleaner or the launderer, but unfortunately, the scale usually confirms that the problem is the extra piece of bread or an occasional



piece of pie, coupled with early darkness and its associated reduction in a desire to get outside and exercise, that has caused my wardrobe changes.

This problem is compounded if you maintain your weight during the summer, and then start the winter cycle without having lost the extra pounds from the previous sedentary season. It seems that before you know it, you have gained 20 to 40 extra pounds, and you are wondering, “How could this have happened to me?”

While watching a recent senior PGA golfing match on TV, I reflected that many of the slim and trim players I used to watch on the pro tour in the ‘70s and ‘80s were now many pounds overweight. Some of them looked very uncomfortable, and the extra weight appeared to have a significant negative effect on their performance.

Then again, there is the occasional competitor like **Gary Player**, who just set a record by playing in his 52nd Masters tournament. Gary always had a reputation for maintaining a high level of fitness, and that has enabled him to compete far beyond anyone’s expectations.

So you might ask, “What has this got to do with me and my practice as an AME?” First of all, if you are one of those who have allowed their weight to blossom, you are probably wishing you had not done so. If so, it would certainly behoove you to start a program of diet and exercise to help you take off those extra pounds. You will feel better about yourself, you will be much healthier, and you will set an excellent example for your examinees.

But, more importantly, you have the opportunity to directly affect the health and lives of the pilots and air traffic controllers you examine. Unfortunately, as I have remarked in past editorials, you may be the only practitioner they see on a routine basis. When you review their 8500s, be sure to consider all of their vital information. If you see any negative trends or if you notice they have gained a few pounds since their last physical, talk to them about it. Tell them about Gary Player or perhaps someone who has allowed his or her health to degenerate, and remind them about the “ounce of prevention” story.

Even if you are not their primary physician, and you think they need additional care, refer them appropriately. The next time they come to see you, if they have lost the weight or corrected some other deficiency, congratulate them on their efforts. Or, if they have not made the recommended course corrections, tell them the “ounce” story again.

Remember, it only takes a few minutes to accomplish this interaction, and it can make a world of difference.

And, as I always say, thanks for everything you do for us and your airmen.

—Fred

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