

# **Obesity and Health:**

## **Abstract**

This essay asks the question, is the illness of obesity a socially constructed health concept within a western, liberalistic paradigm and context and is it possible, obesity can be envisioned as a symptom of a modern lifestyle process? This essay discusses how obesity has become a chronic health problem within a modern western society and endeavours to explain, why a modern, western liberalistic society, finds it hard to diagnose, what can cause the health condition- obesity.

Done by: Peter Evans (Date: 21/06/2011)

# **Obesity and Health:**

Why is it, that health is such a major concern for humans? Is it because health for humans, and all other living things for that matter, is such an essential primordial process in staying alive? The answer of course is yes. The next question of sociological importance is to what extent, is any illness, socially constructed? Hence this is the question I am to endeavour to answer in this essay. Infact I will argue that from a social constructivist philosophical perspective, that the illness of obesity is a socially constructed health concept and that within a western, liberalistic paradigm and context, obesity tends to be envisioned as a symptom of a modern lifestyle process. I will endeavour to elaborate as to how obesity has become a chronic health problem within a modern western society and endeavour to explain, as why a modern, western liberalistic society, finds it hard to diagnose what causes the health condition- obesity. First, what in general terms, is obesity? According to the early 17<sup>th</sup> century Doctor, Tobias Venner and his enlightened, liberalistic philosophical paradigm; obesity is: "An individual disease process, of a fat an gross habit of body, which is far worse than a lean individual body, as it is more prone to become sick." pp.19-20. (Gilman, 1998, pp.19-20) (Blackburn, 2005, pp. 209-210). However from a social constructivist, philosophical paradigm perspective, obesity is seen as a socially constructed illness, which is something quite different entirely (Blackburn, 2005, pp.158, 342). Indeed according to the Political Scientist Oliver, a social constructivist, philosophical paradigm, tends to envisage health concerns, such as obesity within a social context, so as to fully understand and identify the health issue concerned (Oliver, 2006, pp. 611-626) (Haralamobos, Holborn, 1991, pp. 2-5, 19, 758-761, 768, 799-804). Infact within the context of this essay, according to the Professors

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