



[Season 1, Episode 2: What You Need to Know about Weight Loss](#)

Welcome to Healthier You by Vanderbilt Health and Wellness, a podcast to help Vanderbilt faculty and staff with their healthiest lives.

Rachel: Welcome! My name is Rachel and I am one of the health educators at Health Plus. Joining me is Dr. Sahar Takkouche. Thank you for coming in as our guest today.

Dr. Sahar Takkouche: It is my pleasure to be here, Rachel. Thanks for having me.

Rachel: Of course. What I would love to hear more about is your role here at VUMC. Tell us about that.

Dr. Sahar Takkouche: Sure. I am an assistant professor in the department of endocrinology, the lead bariatric expert, and I also serve as the associate chief medical officer in Wilson and Sumner county regions. My role is about helping people get healthier and feel better about themselves.

Rachel: I love it. You have a great passion and offer a lot to, not just our immediate VUMC community, but some of those more regional areas as well, which is really important. And, I am really happy to have your expertise here today. Our goal is to learn about a healthy strategy for weight loss and this is obviously something you know a lot about. So, let's start with setting up the right mindset toward weight and weight loss goals. Something I get asked a lot about is BMI, which is also known as body mass index. What is important to know about BMI and how can we shift away from what can be an all to common focus on weight alone.

Dr. Sahar Takkouche: Excellent question, Rachel. BMI is a really useful tool, but it is just one piece of the puzzle. It is important to remember that health

is not just about the number on the scale. We should really focus on overall wellness, like eating nutritious foods, staying active, feeling good mentally. It is not necessarily about losing pounds on the scale. It is about gaining health.

Rachel: I want to reemphasize that focus. Having the right focus and a healthy focus like that toward any health-related goal is important to have, and really can make such a difference in terms of success and feelings of success. Diving a little bit deeper here, there has been a lot of buzz about weight loss medication. So, let's clear some of the conflicting opinions about that up. What are the options about weight loss medications out there, and what should we really know?

Dr. Sahar Takkouche: Weight loss medications can be helpful for some people, but they are really not the magic solution. They work best when they are combined with the foundations of wellness. What I term the foundations of wellness: Eating right, exercising regularly, getting good quality sleep, as well as stress management. It is also important to talk to a doctor before starting any medications because they can advise you on the best options based on your individual health needs.

Rachel: Having the right healthcare team to back you up is important, and part of that can be tapping into certain resources. Something that I have learned about is the VUMC weight loss bundle, and this is something that you know a lot about. So, tell us about that bundle experience.

Dr. Sahar Takkouche: The weight loss bundle at VUMC is really designed for people who need a little bit more support in their weight loss journey. Now, it does include medication, but it also includes personalized advice, guidance from all different types of health professionals, like nutritionists, social workers, nurse practitioners, physicians, and so on. It is really a great resource and offers a really comprehensive approach to weight loss.

Rachel: There is so much when it can come to the weight loss journey, and again having the right type of support can really make a difference with someone's energy and confidence in themselves. What would you say about other types of accountability and support? What would you recommend somebody tap into for more long-term success with their goals?

Dr. Sahar Takkouche: Accountability is key. I really recommend finding a healthy support system, like a friend, a family member, or even a health coach. Regular check-ins can help you stay on track and remember, it is small consistent steps that lead to big changes over time.

Rachel: I am so glad that you mentioned a health coach. Something that our VUMC employees may not know about is our lifestyle coaching program and I am actually one of the lifestyle coaches here at Health Plus. So, it is a program I am very passionate about, and this is something that is offered to VUMC employees, of course. It is also offered to their spouses. So, those of you listening, you might think hey could my spouse benefit from something like this as well. Because again, sometimes lifestyle change can be really a team effort in a home. So to share a little bit more about that lifestyle coaching process, someone would be able to meet with one of the lifestyle coaches at Health Plus. You are connecting one-on-one. You are discussing your personal health goals, and we really tap into monthly accountability over a six-month period. So, once a month, we are talking about those health goals. We are talking about what is working well. What is not working well, and really trying to find ways to overcome barriers so that you feel more confident in your healthy lifestyle skills that you are setting up for yourself. So, for anyone that is interest in learning a little bit more about that, there will be a link in the show notes for that. So, Dr, Takkouche, thank you so much for bring that up, and emphasizing that, that can be one of the ways to get some accountability with these goals.

Dr. Sahar Takkouche: That is awesome. I think it is so important, especially as we approach the end of the year.

Rachel: Oh, absolutely. And, let's tap into that for a second here. What advice would you want to be the main takeaway when it comes to weight loss as we approach the holidays, and a new year, when there is really a lot of buzz around that.

Dr. Sahar Takkouche: Yeah, this is the most popular time of year for New Year's resolutions, and weight loss advice. The holiday season is all about balance. I think it is important to enjoy your favorite treats. I certainly do, in moderation. What I like to do is fill my plate with healthy proteins and

vegetables, and remember to stay active. It is important to be kind to yourself and to others. Remember, always, that weight loss is a journey, it is not a race. Happy healthy holidays to everyone!

Rachel: Dr. Takkouche, that is a great note for us to end on, and a great reminder again, to be kind to ourselves this time of year, and really throughout the entire year, as we might be thinking about our health in newer, healthier, more supportive ways. So, thank you for helping us touch on this subject a little bit more, and thank you so much for joining us and being here with us today.

Dr. Sahar Takkouche: Rachel, thank you so much for having me. I look forward to a happy and healthy new year for all of us.

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