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**THE TIMES OF INDIA**

## Talking PC that helps you fight obesity

AGENCIES, Oct 28, 2007, 01.00am IST



Now a computerised scale to talk to you and help you in that lonely battle against obesity (TOI Photo)

LONDON: Tired of checking your weight on that scale in the bathroom. Well, now there is a computerised scale that will talk you and help you in that lonely battle against obesity.

The machine, called a mandometer, helps one lose weight by weighing the food and encouraging one to eat it slowly, one mouthful at a time. It also chides people if they eat too fast.

A teenager from Horfield in Bristol has proclaimed the computerised scale, being tested on 120 volunteers by the Childhood Obesity Clinic at the Bristol Royal Hospital for Children in UK, effective in ensuring that his diet stays on track.

Sixteen-year-old Laurence Willshire, who used to weigh about 133 kg, has shed about 25 kg since he turned to the mandometer.

The computer is connected to a set of scales with a plate in which the volunteers fill their food. It records and stores the weight loss from the plate as the volunteers eat, and tell them when they have more than they should. The device also measures how quickly a person eats his meals. If the person carries on eating after it has decided that he has had enough it asks him: Are you still hungry?

"I used to eat very fast. I could eat a very large meal in about three minutes. Now I take about 16 minutes," the *Daily Mail* quoted Laurence as saying.

"The treatment has given me so much confidence. I feel very good about myself now," he added.

Ian Probert, a spokesman for the hospital, said the gadget worked by training the patient to eat at a slower rate.

"A lot of obese people bolt their food so quickly the stomach doesn't have time to tell the brain its full. The mandometer tells them when they can eat and when they can have their next mouthful. It slows the rate of consumption and by having gaps between mouthfuls it trains the patient to control their rate of eating, the rate slows down and the amount of food they consume diminishes."

Laurence began putting on weight when he was 8 and was bullied at school. His lack of self-esteem led to comfort eating and he would eat whole packets of biscuits and multipacks of crisps.

His parents, Lydia, 47, and Roy, 48, tried to stop his bingeing but at his peak Laurence, who is 6ft 7in, had a 60-inch chest. His mother said that the weight loss had had a dramatic effect on her son's personality.

"Hes confident, hes going out, which he never used to do, and he's got a great sense of humour. I don't think we've ever really known the real Laurence until now and it's brilliant," she said.

The mandometer was developed in Sweden to encourage anorexics to speed up their eating. It has been reprogrammed to persuade fat people to slow down.

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