

YOUR HEALTH

Newsletter August 2020



Duradiamond

Building Healthy Business



- OBESITY - AN INCREASING PROBLEM
- AM I DRINKING TOO MUCH?

OBESITY: AN INCREASING ISSUE

Obesity is the most common nutritional disorder in Western society. Almost 30% of people in the UK are obese, with women and the socially deprived being disproportionately affected. And it's getting worse: in 2018/19 there were over 11,000 hospital admissions due to obesity, up 4% on 2017/18.

By 2050, obesity is predicted to affect 60% of adult men, 50% of adult women and 25% of children in England.

What classifies someone as obese? An obese person is 20% or more heavier than their ideal weight. Obesity is graded according to the Body Mass Index (BMI):

- Healthy weight 18.5-24.9
- Overweight 25-29.9
- Obesity I 30-34.9
- Obesity II 35-39.9
- Obesity III 40 or more.

See the BMI calculator:

www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/bmi-calculator/

Why is obesity such a problem? A body mass index greater than 27 is associated with a marked increase in mortality (death). Weight gains of more than 10kg over time are also associated with increased mortality.

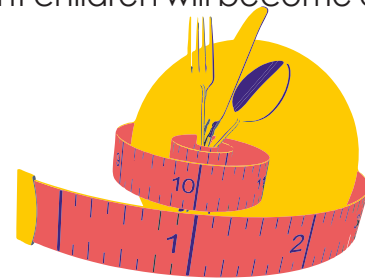
Obesity is an important public health problem because it is associated with:

- Type II diabetes mellitus
- High blood pressure, coronary artery disease and stroke
- High cholesterol
- Certain cancers (breast, colon and endometrial) and menstrual complications
- Gallstone disease
- Venous thrombosis and pulmonary embolism (blood clots on the lungs).

Excess body fat contributes to c.58% of cases of type 2 diabetes, 21% of heart disease and between 8% and 42% of certain cancers.

Obesity may also make **co-existing health problems** worse, e.g. osteoarthritis, shortness of breath, indigestion, sleep apnoea (problems breathing when asleep), risks of childbirth, anxiety and depression and risks of general anaesthesia. **Metabolic syndrome** is a combination of conditions that occur together, increasing your risk of heart disease, which include excess body fat around the waist.

Causes of obesity: The most common cause of obesity is a combination of excessive calorie intake and reduced physical activity. Other causes of obesity may include (i) genetic factors (ii) 'medical' (endocrine) causes of obesity (iii) drug-induced obesity. And increasing obesity rates in children/young adults are important, since most overweight children will become overweight adults.



Management of obesity: this depends on the severity of the obesity, waist circumference and any accompanying risk factors for complications. Methods vary from general advice on healthy weight and lifestyle, to dietary changes and physical activity, to medication and potentially even consideration of bariatric surgery. There is multi-million-pound diet and exercise industry out there. With so many to choose from it can be difficult to find a weight loss plan to suit you. Check out the **British Dietetic Association's pros and cons** on some of the most popular diets:

www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/top-diets-review/

If you are diabetic, pregnant, have a high cholesterol, suffer with gastrointestinal problems, or have any other health conditions that could concern you when considering a change to your diet, **speak to your GP** or a qualified and registered dietician before starting a weight loss pathway.

AM I DRINKING TOO MUCH?

Do you, or someone you know, drink too much? Have you seen your alcohol consumption increase during the **COVID-19 lockdown?**

What are the recommended limits? Men and women are advised not to regularly drink more than 14 units a week. A unit of alcohol is about:

- Half a pint of lower to normal strength lager/beer/cider
- A single small shot measure of spirits
- A small glass of wine contains about 1.5 units of alcohol.

If you drink as much as 14 units a week, it is best to spread them evenly over three days or more, ideally with some days off. There are **four levels of alcohol use:**

- **Social drinking:** either drinking very occasionally or keeping within your units
- **At-risk consumption:** your level of drinking begins to pose a health risk
- **Problem drinking:** drinking causes serious problems to the individual, their family, work and society in general
- **Dependence and addiction:** periodic or chronic intoxication and an uncontrollable craving for drink when sober, despite its harmful consequences, e.g. liver disease, depression, etc.

Alcohol misuse is when you drink in a way that is harmful, or when you are dependent on alcohol.

Risk factors for alcoholism: There is no single factor to account for the variation in individual risk. Factors may include:

- **Family history:** offspring of parents with alcohol dependence are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence. Studies show a genetic component to the risk of alcohol dependence
- **Stress, adverse life events and abuse**
- **Gender:** men are twice as likely to be problem drinkers

- **Psychological factors** including having a mental health issue especially depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), psychosis and drug misuse
- **Occupation:** publicans and brewers have an increased access to drink and are at a higher risk. Heavy drinking is seen as the norm in some jobs, e.g. sailors
- **Homelessness:** a third of homeless people have a drink problem
- **Race:** British Afro-Caribbeans and Asians have a lower rate of alcohol problems. 20% of Chinese and Japanese cannot drink alcohol because of an inherited deficiency of acetaldehyde dehydrogenase.

What's wrong with drinking alcohol? Drinking alcohol has both short- and long-term risks. People who binge drink are more likely to behave recklessly and are at greater risk of being in an accident. Persistent alcohol misuse increases your risk of **serious health conditions** including heart disease, stroke, liver disease, cancers of the liver, bowel, mouth and/or breast, pancreatitis. As well as causing serious health problems, long-term alcohol misuse can lead to social problems, e.g. unemployment, divorce, domestic abuse and homelessness.

Am I drinking too much? You could be misusing alcohol if (i) you feel you should cut down on your drinking (ii) other people have criticised your drinking (iii) you feel guilty or bad about your drinking (iv) you need a drink first thing in the morning to steady your nerves or get rid of a hangover.

Getting help: If you are concerned about your drinking or someone else's, a good first step is to see a GP. They will be able to discuss the services and treatments available. Support includes

- Drinkline 0300 123 1110
- www.alcoholchange.org.uk/
- Alcoholics Anonymous 0800 91770650
- Al-Anon Family Groups 020 7403 0888.