

BBC Radio Shropshire Factsheet

Why Weight?

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We hear so much about obesity these days, but at the same time, there is talk about the size zero models. It is not good to be too fat - or too thin.

The UK population is getting fatter, with levels of obesity tripling since 1980. In Shropshire between half and two-thirds of the population are overweight, with near a quarter of the population being clinically obese. So those of us in these categories are not alone.

Obesity is basically caused by consistently eating and drinking more calories than are burnt off through physical activity. Obesity does run in families, and the tendency to put on weight is greater in some people than in others eating a similar diet.

Maintaining a healthy weight is difficult. High calorie food is cheap, well advertised and constantly available. We eat out or eat on the go. We drink more sugary, carbonated drinks. We are also becoming more sedentary - we are not as active as we were in previous decades due to the increased use of cars, computers and labour-saving devices. We have lost the balance in our energy in - energy out equation and the surplus of calories, no matter how small, are gradually building up and being stored as fat.

Being overweight increases the risk of health problems including heart attack and stroke, diabetes, bowel cancer and high blood pressure. Excess weight also makes arthritis more likely and can make breathing and sleeping difficult. The risk of health problems increases the more overweight we are.

Guidelines for a healthy weight

The most common benchmark of healthy weight for adults is based on height and weight, and is called body mass index (BMI).

BMI acts as a good indicator of the total amount of body fat and a reliable predictor of the likelihood of disease associated with being too heavy (or too light).

BMI is calculated with the formula:

$$\text{BMI} = \text{weight (in kg) divided by height (in m)}^2$$

1. Work out your height in metres* and multiply the figure by itself.
2. Measure your weight in kilograms*
3. Divide the weight by the height squared (ie. the answer to Question 1.)



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For example you might be 1.6m (5 feet 3 inches) tall and weigh 65kg (10 stone). The calculation would then be: $1.6 \times 1.6 = 2.56$. BMI would be 65 divided by $2.56 = 25.39$.

**if you work in imperial – multiply your height in feet by 0.3048 to get your height in metres, and multiply you weight in pounds by 2.2 to get your weight in kilograms.*

Alternatively you can visit:

www.bbc.co.uk/health/healthy_living/your_weight/whatis_healthy.shtml

where you can find a tool to calculate your BMI from your height and weight in imperial or metric.

Once you have calculated you BMI, check out it out in this table:

Risk of Associated Disease According to BMI and Waist Size			
BMI		Waist less than or equal to 40 in. (men) or 35 in. (women)	Waist greater than 40 in. (men) or 35 in. (women)
18.9 or less	Underweight – which can also be bad for your health.	--	N/A
19 - 24.9	Healthy	--	N/A
25.0 - 29.9	Overweight – try to cut down on sugary and fatty foods and on the amount you eat. Increasing your levels of activity should also help.	Increased	High
30.0 - 34.9	Obese – it is important that you try to lose some weight and should consider asking for help from your doctor.	High	Very High
35.0 - 39.9		Very High	Very High
40 or greater	Extremely Obese - it is important that you try to lose some weight and you should seek help from your doctor.	Extremely High	Extremely High

source: www.consumer.gov/weightloss/

Limitations of the BMI

We should also be aware of your body shape and body composition. We might have a BMI over 25 but have very little body fat if we have a lot of muscle. Or we might be in



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the correct weight range for our height but have very little muscle and too much body fat. If you think either of these might apply to you, then looking at your body shape and body composition can be useful.

Body shape

The risk to our health relates to where the fat is stored on our bodies. Carrying fat around the middle of the body, giving the body an apple shape, is a greater risk to our health than carrying it around the bottom and thighs, often known as pear shaped. Measuring our waists give a rough guide to whether we need to lose some weight. The at-risk waist measurement is 102 cm (40 inches) for men and 88cm (35 inches) for women. If you are under 150 cm (4'11 ft) tall, a smaller measurement will apply. Ask your GP or practice nurse for advice if you are worried about your weight.

What can we do?

Become self aware

Start this week by getting some awareness of what you are eating, how you are eating and when you are eating. It might be helpful to keep a diary of everything you eat and drink and what activity you take. It might also be helpful to write down how you feel when you eat each meal or snack to see if there is any pattern.

Take small steps based on this evidence

Armed with the information from your diary you can look at your food buying habits, cooking habits and eating habits and find simple, small steps to burn more calories through physical activity than you take in from food and drink. You need to tip the 'energy balance' by eating fewer calories, burning more of them off or, preferably, a combination of both.

Examine whether your diary shows you eating a balanced, varied diet that incorporates all major food groups and if there is an imbalance, take steps to change it. Cut out sugary, carbonated drinks. Do not eat on the go, make a proper time and space for eating and for some proper cooking.

Be realistic and flexible enough so that you can stick to it - no extreme hunger and no blanket bans on certain foods. Most of all, work out how you can add ways of being more physically active into your everyday life, whether its doing 10,000 steps a day, climbing the stairs more often, playing with the kids, walking the dog or dancing to the radio.



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Set short or near term targets

You do not have to shift the energy balance much each day – you just need to be in deficit.

If you have a lot of weight to lose, you need to set some near term targets and take it in stages – perhaps even week to week planning to lose 0.5 -1 kg (1-2lbs) with the aim of losing an achievable target by the end of six months. Do not set your targets too high or plan to lose all of your weight in one as this would be unrealistic and you will be setting yourself up to fail. Doctors often suggest a 10% weight loss to begin with, achieved over about six months.

Plan this weight loss exercise of six months followed by a period of trying to maintain your new weight, before you move on to having another go to lose some more weight.

Build around you some social support

Get your friends and family to support you and considering building around you some social support – perhaps listening in to the updates of others on BBC Radio Shropshire or you might consider joining a healthy eating, slimming or walking for health club. Knowing that each week you are going to something will help to build structure and support to your programme. You can swap ideas, tips and stories with you new support group or friends. It is important to have some structure to your programme, something to aim for and some support.

Fit in the changes to your everyday lifestyle

You need to work out a way of making your lifestyle changes sustainable – they need to be small, gradual steps built into your life that are tolerable to you – then you have a chance of the lifestyle changes becoming permanent. It is about changing your behaviour for good. It is not good to have a sudden starvation phase followed by a sudden binge phase. You have got to have some patience and you have got to have some discipline. It is not easy and you need support and some advice but with all that in place it is perfectly possible to lose weight in the same way that you gain it – a little bit less everyday.

Tips for controlling calories

- Use your food diary to find ways of cutting down calories. You could cut 500 calories per day by changing the balance of foods on your plate, eg. less cheese and more salad with your dinner.
- Launder your fridge – clear out the junk and stock up with healthier ‘goodies’. Out go the full-fat dairy foods, fatty meat pies and fizzy drinks. In come lean meat, fish, low-fat dairy foods, plenty of fruit and vegetables and perhaps chilled water. Don’t forget to ‘makeover’ you food cupboards as well.



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- Eat regular meals and check your portion sizes, basing your meals on a variety of healthy choices from the main food groups.
- Examine your diary and learn how to cope with feelings, not feed them.
- Do not forget that drinks count towards your daily calorie intake. Alcohol is high in calories - three pints of beer could add up to 600 calories. Sugary drinks should also be limited. A can of cola contains 135 calories with no nutritional value.
- Aim to do 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on most days of the week. Moderate activity is where you feel slightly warm and out of breath - brisk walking is ideal and burns approximately 150 calories.

CHEC Health Centre

If you live in the Telford Area the CHEC health centre can help:

1) Why Weight Slimming Club:

This is a pay as you go service (£2.60-£3.50 per session depending on concessionary status) and sessions run across Telford EVERY week. You get a brief one-to-one weight in, a great starter pack and info, 30 minutes low impact aerobics session with chair based alternatives and 30 minutes nutrition session from a NHS weight loss mentor. Telephone 01952 686310 or ask at any of Telford & Wrekin Council's Leisure Centres for more information.

2) Why weight PLUS:

To access this service you'll need to see your nurse or doctor and ask for a referral to our service. If you are referred you'll get a 30 minute individual appointment with a NHS weight loss mentor followed by regular support, free visits to weekly master class session (like the one at CHEC centre), and subsidised exercise classes. Much more support in terms of information, confidence building and self esteem. **For more information see your GP or practice nurse.**

The CHEC health information centre is open to the public – telephone 01952 582659.

Medical help

If you are very overweight then you should seek medical advice from your doctor who might refer you to a dietician for extra help and advice. There are currently two medicines that your doctor can prescribe to aid weight loss in combination with a low calorie diet. These are generally only prescribed for people with a BMI 30+, or BMI 28+ if there are other health risk factors such as diabetes. For severe obesity, surgery to bypass the stomach or to make it smaller, may be an option as a last resort.



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Other sources of help:

British Nutrition Foundation tel: 020 7404 6504 website: www.nutrition.org.uk	The Nutrition Society tel: 020 7602 0228 website: www.nutrition society.org
Big Matters (Obesity Information Support) website: www.bigmatters.co.uk	British Heart Foundation Heart Information Line 08450 708070 website: www.bhf.org.uk
Diabetes UK Tel: 0207 424 1000 website: www.diabetes.org.uk	Heart UK (Information about Cholestrol) tel: 0845 450 5988 website: www.heartuk.org.uk
Men's Health Magazine website: www.menshealth.co.uk	WLSinfo (Weight Loss Surgery Information and Support) tel: 0151 222 4737 website: www.wlsinfo.org.uk
Institute of Child Health tel: 020 7242 9789 website: www.ich.ucl.ac.uk/ich	Coeliac UK tel: 01494 437278 website: www.coeliac.co.uk
The MEND Programme - the healthy lifestyle programme for overweight children and their families. tel: 08706 091405 website: www.mendprogramme.com	Eating Disorders Association Adult helpline: 0845 634 1414 Youthline: 0845 634 7650 website: www.edauk.com
The Obesity Awareness and Solutions Trust, TOAST tel: 01279 8660 10 website: www.toast-uk.org.uk	Weight Concern tel: 020 7679 6636 website: www.weightconcern.org.uk
Food Fitness tel: 020 7836 2460 website: www.foodfitness.org.uk	Overeaters Anonymous website: www.oa.org
The BBC is not responsible for the content of external websites	

Finally, if you do not have access to the internet at home, staff at your local library will be able to let you view the above-mentioned web sites on their computers. This service is free.

