

How to Avoid Obesity

Tutor's Handbook



Introduction to Avoiding Obesity

Understanding Obesity

Overweight and obesity have become a global public health concern, and it is something that is affecting local communities across Europe. In 2018, 39% of the global adult population was overweight and 13% were recorded as being 'obese', according to the World Health Organization (WHO). It is estimated that between 20% and 25% of children and adolescents in the world suffer with obesity.

Obesity is characterised by an abnormal or excessive accumulation of fat harmful to health and is generated by an energy imbalance between calories consumed and spent. We know that men require 2,500 calories per day to maintain their current weight and women require 2,000 calories per day. We also know that we burn a certain number of calories each day based on our daily activities – this figure varies from person to person and is based on how active they are each day and what weight they are – with individuals with higher weight using more calories to move around each day than those with lower weights. So, if a person eats more than their required calories each day over a prolonged period of time and does not counteract that behaviour by exercising to work off the extra calories, this leads to the person putting on excessive amounts of weight. With the popularity of convenience food and a sedentary lifestyle that is

increasingly the case for office workers, students and even young people today, it is no surprise that we are facing a global health problem with obesity.

Individuals who are classified as 'obese' are at risk for various diseases, including:

- type 2 diabetes
- high blood pressure
- heart disease and strokes
- certain types of cancer
- sleep apnoea
- osteoarthritis
- fatty liver disease
- kidney disease
- some types of cancer such as breast cancer and bowel cancer
- pregnancy problems, such as high blood sugar during pregnancy, high blood pressure, and increased risk for caesarean delivery (C-section)

Obesity can also affect your quality of life and lead to psychological issues, such as depression and low self-esteem.

This comes as no surprise; we understand that excess weight is harmful to our health. However, obesity also takes away from an individual's quality of life, and as such, it can affect the following day-to-day activities of individuals. People with obesity, can be susceptible to the following:

- breathlessness

- increased sweating
- snoring
- difficulty doing physical activity
- often feeling very tired
- joint and back pain
- low confidence
- feeling isolated

Tips for Preventing Obesity

The good news is that these diseases, an obesity itself, can be prevented through healthy lifestyle habits, such as maintaining a healthy, balanced diet, controlling calorie intake and exercising regularly.

Some recommendations to avoid obesity are:

- Limit the consumption of foods that are rich in sugars and fats. You can check if these are present in the food you are eating by checking the label of the products you eat. For example, some cereals are rich in fibre, but also high in sugars so they should be avoided.
- Eat fruit and vegetables several times a day, as well as whole grains and nuts. These are good sources of dietary fibre and natural sugars.
- Keep junk food out of your house. It is often difficult to resist junk food – sweets, bars, crisps, ice-cream, biscuits, cakes, etc. However, be smart and do not consume this type of food as this will only lead to weight gain.
- Your diet begins in the supermarket! If you don't buy unhealthy, sugar and fat-rich foods, you won't be able to consume them when you're at home. When shopping, make a conscious effort to buy foods that are rich in nutrients, and low in sugar and saturated fats.
- Engage in regular physical activity
 - for weight loss experts recommend up to 60 minutes per day for young people and 150 minutes per week for adults. If an individual is already obese and needs to lose weight, it is recommended to start by walking 30 minutes a day at a brisk pace.
- Weigh yourself on a regular basis to monitor your progress in losing weight, however it is important not to obsess over the weighing scales. It can help to control your weight by being weighed regularly, but we only recommend doing so once per week.
- Drinking water is very important to maintain a healthy diet and eliminate toxins. In addition, water also helps us to feel full, so we don't need to eat food as regularly.
- Once each year, visit your doctor for a full medical check-up. At this check-up your doctor will check your Body Mass Index (BMI) and can give you support and advice to help you to lose weight. Doctors advise adults to have a medical check-up once a year.

How to use this Resource with your Local Health Group?

This handbook presents some introductory information on the topic of obesity and how it can be avoided. It is important to teach healthy eating habits to children and young people in your family and community so that they can grow up with healthy habits and having a healthy relationship with food. To use this resource with your local group, we recommend that you first play the short video lecture and then lead a group discussion on the topic of obesity.

Please ensure that you are mindful of others when discussing this issue – those who suffer with obesity or who have children or relatives who suffer with it can have a hard time discussing it. Knowing the health risks associated with obesity is a real concern for any individual affected by it, so people may not be willing to talk about it or to listen to suggestions for how they can change their behaviour. All you can do is be open, non-judgemental and to objectively give the facts before introducing a short group activity.

To accompany this handbook, you will also find a short PowerPoint presentation that can be used with your local health network to introduce the topic of obesity and how to avoid it to them. This presentation gives some of the basic information that is included in this handbook. Use the presentation to:

- Talk to the members of your local group about obesity, whether or not they think it's a public health concern in their community and what they could do to support others to avoid it.

Group Activity

Once you have shared the digital resource and the PowerPoint presentation with your group members, you can start a group discussion about how you would raise awareness about obesity in your local community, without offending overweight people? Through this short activity, work with your group to create a campaign outline that could help to get the message out about how to avoid obesity, and where it could be promoted. Work with your group to come up with the following:

- A tag line or slogan for your campaign.
- The type of campaign – based on your local community would it be suitable in a school, in a parents' club, online through social media, etc.
- Audience for your campaign – who is this most relevant for in your community?
- What messages will you communicate?

Once you have facilitated this planning session, you may choose to develop and implement this campaign with the support of your local group, based on what you have learned in the Lay Family Health Advisor training.



ON CALL

Lay Community Health Advisors



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Perspective



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