



Be Weight Wise: why being a healthy weight is so important

THE number of people who are overweight has been rapidly increasing in the UK. At the moment 38% of people in the UK are overweight, and a further 20% of us are obese. If this continues, a quarter of the British population will be obese by 2010.

Perhaps more worrying is the fact that children of all ages are also fatter than ever before.



How can being overweight affect you?

BEING overweight or obese can affect nearly every part of your body. It can **increase your chances of having a heart attack, developing diabetes and having high blood pressure**. Being overweight can also cause:

- Breathlessness
- Problems with the gall bladder
- Some cancers
- Aching joints & osteoarthritis
- Back pain
- Sleep difficulties & snoring
- Infertility
- Sweating
- Difficulties in walking
- Low self-esteem, poor body-image, not wanting to go out in public

Being overweight also costs us all money. It's been reported that the cost to the NHS of treating obesity is about £485 million pounds a year, and that obesity-related problems result in 18 million sick days a year.

Reducing the health risks

BUT if you are overweight, it's not all bad news. There is something you can do to improve your health. We now know that losing (and keeping off) just 5-10% of your body weight – that's 10kg (about one and a half stone) for a 100kg (16 stone) person – can provide many health benefits. For example, it can:

- Reduce blood pressure
- Improve control of blood sugar levels in people with diabetes
- Reduce the risk of angina
- Improve blood cholesterol levels

This means that, overall, losing weight (and keeping a healthy weight) will help you live longer and give you a better quality of life.

Even a small weight loss of 5-10 kg (11-22lbs) can improve back and joint pain, reduce breathlessness and improve sleeping problems.

Personal and lifestyle gain

LOSING weight not only improves your health in the long run, there are many other benefits to be gained. Many overweight people say that they cannot do what they would like to do, such as play with their children, wear what they would like to wear, or be who they would like to be, simply because they are overweight.

People who have lost weight say:

'I feel so much fitter – now I can run around the park with my kids.'

'I now feel brave enough to wear a swimming costume on holiday.'

'I know it sounds silly, but I used to hate the way my legs rubbed together when I walked – I don't get that anymore.'

'I feel so much more confident about myself – I now enjoy going out, whereas before I would have made excuses to stay at home.'



'I haven't lost much weight, just 5kg or so, but already I feel less out of breath if I have to run for a bus.'

'It's so nice to be able to buy the clothes I want, instead of wearing baggy t-shirts all the time.'

"I just feel so much better about myself."

