

I thought losing weight was about willpower

Turns out, it's about science



There is more to weight than just diet and exercise

This educational material is developed by Novo Nordisk and is intended for members of the public with a purpose to increase awareness about obesity

This is not a real patient
but only an illustration

Introduction

Around 1 in 4 adults in the UK have obesity. But, for a condition that is so common, it is often misunderstood, both by those who have it and those who don't. This leaflet aims to:

- Dispel some of the myths and misconceptions around obesity
- Explain why it can be a risk to our health
- Uncover why losing weight isn't as simple as just eating less and moving more
- Show how talking about our struggles with weight can help us manage it more effectively

What is obesity and how is it measured?

Many healthcare professionals consider obesity to be a long-term illness that requires ongoing management.

The World Health Organisation defines obesity as 'excessive body fat that presents a risk to health'. A common measure of obesity is body mass index (BMI) which is a person's weight (in kilograms) divided by the square of his or her height (in metres). A person with a BMI of 30kg/m^2 or more is generally considered as having obesity.

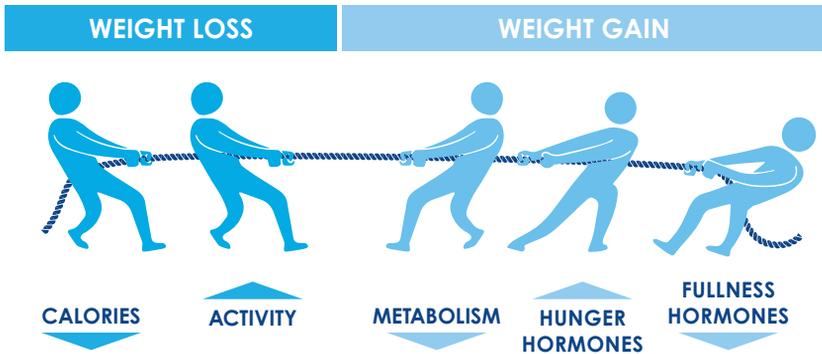


If you're not sure of your BMI, use an online BMI calculator or ask a healthcare professional to help you find out.

Why is losing weight and keeping it off difficult?

Losing and maintaining weight isn't just about willpower; it turns out, it's about science. When someone has obesity, there are changes that impact the way the body deals with hunger and how it burns calories. Which means it can be difficult for them to keep the weight off after losing it.

Scientists have found that after weight loss, the levels of a variety of vitamins, minerals, peptides, and hormones involved in the regulation of body weight were disrupted for at least 1 year after losing weight. These changes can alter appetite regulation, leading to increased hunger and eating more food than our bodies need. In other words, when we lose weight our body increases our hunger signals in an attempt to regain it.



This is why it isn't a straight line downwards over time to our ideal healthy weight, there will be ups and downs along the way.



Knowing that the body keeps trying to regain weight for so long is news to many people. But it can help you to remember that you haven't failed if you don't lose the amount of weight you initially expected and it's normal for weight loss to plateau and go up sometimes. A downward trend over time is what's important.

What causes obesity?

It's a common myth that obesity is caused by a combination of eating too much and exercising too little, and that people with obesity just lack willpower. But the fact is, it's just not that simple. Healthy eating and physical activity are important, but they may not be enough for some people to control their weight. There are many other factors that play a big part. For example:

Our genes

40% to 70% of the causes of obesity can be attributed to your genes. A person's genes determine how much environmental factors may impact their weight.



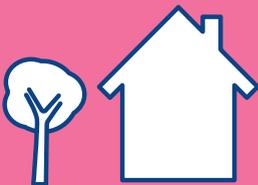
Our appetite signals

The body makes hormones, or messengers, that control body functions, such as appetite, digestion, and metabolism. When people with obesity lose weight, appetite signals are affected.



Our environment

Things like how easy it is for us to access healthy foods, some medications and our living and social environments are all examples of factors that affect our ability to manage our weight.



Our behaviour

Sleep, stress and our day-to-day lifestyle can all affect our appetite, eating habits and activity levels, which in turn can contribute to obesity.



What are the risks of having obesity?

Maintaining a healthy weight isn't just about looking good and how we feel in our clothes. Excess weight increases risks for other health issues, including some forms of cancer, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and type 2 diabetes. In fact, obesity can increase the risk of developing a number of other conditions. And the chances of developing more advanced weight-related conditions increase as weight increases. Some weight-related health risks include:

- Cardiovascular disease, including heart disease and stroke
- Pre-diabetes
- Depression
- Osteoarthritis
- Sleep apnoea (difficulty breathing while sleeping)
- Asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- Fatty liver disease
- Infertility

What are the benefits of weight loss?

The good news is that even relatively modest amounts of weight loss can lead to significant health benefits. For people with obesity, losing just 5–10% of their body weight can reduce the risks of some conditions like heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and high cholesterol.

A graphic showing a list of health conditions with downward arrows, indicating a reduction in risk. To the right, a speech bubble contains a scale icon and the text '5% to 10% WEIGHT LOSS MAY REDUCE SOME RISK'.

- ↓ TYPE 2 DIABETES
- ↓ HEART DISEASE
- ↓ BLOOD PRESSURE
- ↓ BAD CHOLESTEROL
- ↓ SLEEP APNOEA

5% to 10%
WEIGHT LOSS
MAY REDUCE
SOME RISK

But what does 5% to 10% weight loss actually look like? Here are some examples:

Current weight		5% weight loss		10% weight loss	
Stones/lbs	Kilograms	Stones/lbs	Kilograms	Stones/lbs	Kilograms
12st	76.2kg	8lbs	3.8kg	1st 2lbs	7.6kg
14st	88.9kg	10lbs	4.4kg	1st 4lbs	8.9kg
16st	101.6kg	11lbs	5.1kg	1st 6lbs	10.2kg
18st	114.3kg	13lbs	5.7kg	1st 8lbs	11.4kg
20st	127.0kg	1st	6.4kg	2st	12.7kg
22st	139.7kg	1st 1lb	7.0kg	2st 2lbs	14.0kg

So, what's the answer?

People with obesity generally make 7 serious attempts to lose weight over time. If you've tried over and over again, if it never seems to get any easier and the results never seem to last, you may need help to end the cycle. Whilst it may not feel easy, research shows that talking to a healthcare professional can help.

Managing your weight is a lifelong process, so it's important to have regular conversations with a healthcare professional about it, just as you would about other conditions or concerns you may have about your health. They can help you work out the best approach for you and support you on your journey.

Here are some of the questions they can help you to answer:

- Why am I able to lose weight, but have trouble keeping it off?
- Is my current weight putting me at risk for other medical conditions or diseases?
- What can I start doing to help manage my weight?

Your journey to a healthier weight could start with a chat!



Obesity is a chronic medical condition that requires ongoing management. If your goal is to lose weight and maintain it in the long term, start the conversation. Talk to your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for support and advice that is right for you.

**For more information,
visit www.truthaboutweight.co.uk**