

SUMMARY OF INTELLIGENCE ON OBESITY

[See linked sheets on **diet and nutrition** and **physical activity**]

KEY FACTS

- Obesity and overweight increase the risk of the biggest killer diseases, such as heart disease, cancer and diabetes.
- The prevalence of obesity has trebled since the 1980s, and well over half of all adults are either overweight or obese – almost 24 million adults.
- If the number of obese children continues to rise, children will have a shorter life expectancy than their parents.
- If current trends continue, at least one-third of adults, one-fifth of boys and one-third of girls will be obese by 2020.
- The cost of obesity is estimated at up to £3.7 billion per year, including £49 million for treating obesity, £1.1 billion for treating the consequences of obesity, and indirect costs of £1.1 billion for premature death and £1.45 billion for sickness absence. The cost of obesity plus overweight is estimated at up to £7.4 billion per year.
- Burning off the calories in a fast food chain's cheeseburger, fries and a shake equates to a nine-mile walk.

Inequalities exist

- In England in 1999, the prevalence of obesity among black Caribbean women was 50% higher than average and among Pakistani women 25% higher than average. Obesity in Asian children was almost four times more common than in white children.
- Obesity is more common among lower social groups. 16% of 'professional' males and females were obese, compared to 23% of males and 29% of females classified as 'unskilled manual'.

WE ARE NOW GOING TO ...

Health in the consumer society

- Implement a new cross-government campaign to raise awareness of the health risks of obesity and the steps people can take through diet and physical activity to prevent obesity.

A health-promoting NHS

- Act on National Institute for Clinical Excellence guidance on prevention, identification, management and treatment of obesity to be published in 2007.
- Produce a 'weight loss' guide to help people select effective approaches to maintain a more healthy weight.
- Set up an independent 'national partnership for obesity'. The partnership will act as a source of information for research, evidence of effectiveness and practical action on the prevention and management of obesity.
- Test the involvement of the independent sector in providing behaviour change programmes as part of a procurement for a 'year of care' for diabetic patients.
- Allocate new funding for training, management, provision of evidence-based obesity prevention and treatment, based on National Occupational Standards for obesity.
- Develop a patient activity questionnaire by the end of 2005 to support NHS staff and others in assessing the need for interventions such as exercise referral.

- Develop a comprehensive care pathway for obesity, providing a model for prevention and treatment.

Health Development Agency evidence briefings summarise evidence on the effectiveness of approaches to promote health, and include *The Management of Obesity and Overweight* (2003). (www.hda.nhs.uk/documents/obesity_evidence_briefing_summary.pdf)

WHAT THE CONSULTATION RAISED

Consultation responses on this issue focused on access to leisure facilities for physical activity, encouraging children's play and school-based physical activity, food advertising to children and more or improved labelling and food packaging. More details are given in factsheets on diet and nutrition and physical activity.

In addition to these areas, people also recommended more education and training for healthcare staff and more community-based services. People thought services could include obesity and nutrition programmes, programmes to provide diet advice for the elderly, counselling services, slimming clubs, and schemes such as food advisers in supermarkets.

WHAT WE ARE DOING ALREADY

- Good foundations are in place through local action on adult obesity through the National Service Frameworks for Coronary Heart Disease and Diabetes. The Priorities and Planning Framework for PCTs also includes advice on diet and activity.
- Prescribing of obesity drugs has trebled since NICE guidance (2001) – over 700,000 items of drugs to tackle obesity were dispensed in 2002–03.

WE WILL HAVE DELIVERED IF...

...we 'halt the year-on-year rise in obesity among children under 11 by 2010, in the context of a broader strategy to tackle obesity in the population as a whole' (2004 Government PSA target).