

WELCOME TO THE AUTUMN EDITION OF THE WEIGHT CONCERN NEWSLETTER!

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NEW FACES AND A NEW LOOK FOR WEIGHT CONCERN

Weight Concern has adopted a fresh new logo and colour scheme, which will gradually be introduced across all of our materials. This includes a new strapline - 'Fighting obesity with knowledge' to emphasise the scientific evidence base behind everything we do as a charity.

We recently recruited two full-time team members to help extend the charity's activities. **Alison**

Chipperfield brings a wealth of practical experience to her role as Weight Concern's Specialist Dietitian in obesity management, having treated numerous overweight and obese patients as part of her previous work in the Nutrition and Dietetics Department at University College London Hospital.

Weight Concern's new Executive Director, **Caroline Swain**, joins from a sight charity, where she was Development Manager. Caroline's responsibilities will include fundraising for the many research and information services initiatives we are keen to pursue if we can secure funding.

CHILDREN'S FOOD BILL

Following a lobbying campaign by Weight Concern and 136 other charities, Mary Creagh, MP for Wakefield has presented the Children's Food Bill to Parliament as a Private Member's Bill.

The Bill aims to improve children's current and future health and prevent the many diseases and conditions which are linked to their unhealthy diets.

It seeks to:

- protect children from the marketing of unhealthy food and drink products
- introduce mandatory nutrient and quality standards for all school meals
- prohibit the sale of unhealthy food and drink products from school vending machines
- ensure compulsory food education and related practical skills in the national curriculum
- place a duty on Government to promote healthy foods to children, such as fruit and vegetables.

Weight Concern hopes that the Children's Food Bill will soon become law. For more information, see www.childrensfoodbill.org.uk

SHAPE-UP GROUPS IN UCL

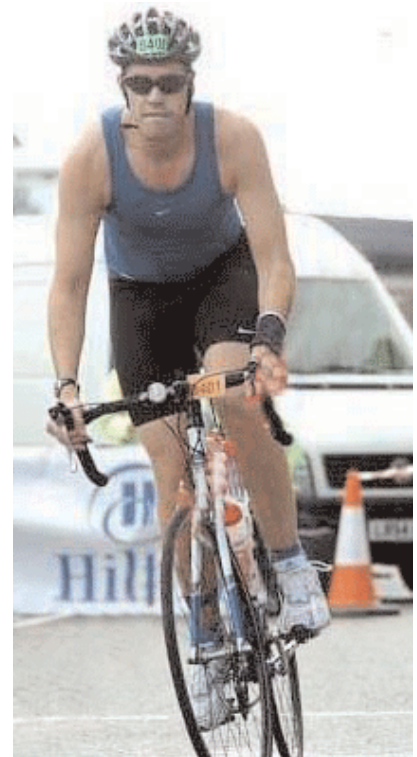
Weight Concern staff recently ran a Shape-Up course for colleagues in University College London. The group of 10 people met for 8 weeks under the guidance of Laura Marlow, Health Psychologist and Alison Chipperfield, Specialist Dietitian.

The course had some fantastic feedback, and both the facilitators and the Shape-Up group members found it a highly rewarding experience. More comments from participants and an account from Laura of the facilitator's perspective can be found on the Weight Concern website under "Shape-Up Groups".

Weight Concern's next Shape-Up Facilitator Training course for health professionals is fully booked. We are now planning training dates for 2006 and details will be available shortly.

WEIGHT CONCERN TRIATHLETES - FIT AND FANTASTIC!

Weight Concern's two fittest members of staff put theory into practice at this year's London Triathlon with truly impressive results. Both keen advocates of taking regular exercise, Alison Chipperfield and Paul Chadwick pushed their endurance to the limit in the three-stage race as they swam 1500 m, cycled 40 km and then ran 10 km to complete the challenging course on 7th August. Months of training paid off when both crossed the finishing line with times 15 minutes faster than they had dared to predict. Far from resting on their laurels, Alison and Paul are already planning to enter next year's event and have thrown down the gauntlet to colleagues and Weight Concern supporters to follow their example! For details of how to embark on the challenge of a lifetime, visit www.thelondontriathlon.com



WEIGHT WATCH

WHAT'S HAPPENING, WHAT'S NEW IN WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

BMA REPORT ON PREVENTING CHILDHOOD OBESITY

Weight Concern welcomes the recent report produced by the BMA on Childhood Obesity. The BMA in agreement with the International obesity Task Force concludes that in order to halt the obesity epidemic, interventions at the family or school level are required.

Prevention strategies will need coordinated effort between the medical community, health administrators, teachers, parents, food producers and processors, retailers and caterers, advertisers and the media, recreation and sports planners, urban architects, city planners, politicians and legislators.

The report urges the government to launch a sustained, consistent public education campaign to promote healthy eating and exercise, they also call for improved collaboration between key groups.

In line with campaigning for the Children's Food the BMA called for a ban on all advertising of unhealthy food aimed at school children, urged manufacturers to reduce salt, sugar and fat in pre-prepared meals and proposed the introduction of mandatory nutrition guidelines for all school meals.

Report available on <http://www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/ChildhoodObesity>

TOP CHEF CATCHES FSA COOKING BUS

Leading chef Gordon Ramsay jumped aboard the Food Standards Agency (FSA) Cooking Bus to help launch Focus on Food Week, which ran from 27 June until 1 July. Focus on food week (endorsed by the FSA) is aimed at improving food education in British schools.



For the past 3 years the state-of-the-art mobile kitchen has travelled the country for 42 weeks of the year visiting primary and secondary schools. Interactive cooking workshops inspire both young people and teachers to put cooking at the core of the food curriculum. Teaching children basic cooking skills is fundamental to improving their understanding and appreciation of food and health.

The Cooking Bus is also given priority use to schools in low-income areas, thus helping to improve the diet and education in disadvantaged groups. This will in turn help to combat the higher risk of disease related to poor diet and rates of overweight and obesity in lower socio-economic classes. Schools can apply for the Cooking Bus via the following link:

www.food.gov.uk/healthiereating/bus/

WEIGHT WISE @ WORK

Throughout June, dietitians around the country were at the forefront of workplace initiatives to encourage and empower people at work to make changes to their eating and physical activity behaviours. The aim of the Weight Wise campaign, run by the British Dietetic Association, is to increase public awareness of the benefits of a balanced diet in achieving and maintaining a healthy weight.

The campaign is supported by the Weight Wise @ Work resource pack. This consists of a workplace-friendly tool-kit to help achieve a 'healthier' working environment via simple lifestyle changes. Fact sheets on 'Healthier snacking @ work' and an Activity Poster aim to get people moving more at work. These are all useful ways to help people to lead a healthier lifestyle and lose weight.

This campaign falls in line with the BBC Big Challenge 2005, which is focusing on promoting health in the workplace. For further information about the above campaigns see <http://www.bda.uk.com/weightwise.html>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/bigchallenge/>

FEAR OVER FOOD AND DRINKING HABITS

A recent report revealed that people are drinking more alcohol and consuming less fruit and vegetables, thus raising fears about public health. The survey of 17,000 people into consumption trends was compiled by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. It showed a fall in fruit and vegetable sales, estimating that people ate 3.7 portions a day on average – falling short of the recommended 'five-a-day' target.

Also a cause for concern was the fact that people were getting more of their energy consumption from food and drinks high in fat, saturated fat and sugar. In line with this money spent on confectionary rose by 5.8%, while soft drinks sales were up by 10%.



HAZARDOUS WAIST?

New Approaches to Tackling Male Weight Problems

EXTENT OF OBESITY AND OVERWEIGHT IN MEN

The facts about the current extent of male weight problems in the UK are startling. In England approximately two thirds (65.4%) of men have a BMI of more than 25, and 31% of men now have a waist circumference of over 102cms³. The average waist circumference has increased to 97.6cms - an increase of 3.8cm (4%) between the years of 1994 to 2003.

Carrying excess weight around the waist, also referred to as 'abdominal adiposity' poses a serious risk to developing ill health such as heart disease, certain cancer's, high blood pressure, stroke and diabetes.

Interestingly the critical age period during which the proportion of men, with a BMI of more than 25 almost doubles (from 31%-59%), is between the ages of 25 to 34.

KEY EVIDENCE

Research shows there is a clear need for a male-specific approach to weight management. Findings from the Counterweight Study (which is addressing weight management in primary care), include the fact that women are more likely than men to have ever had their weight or BMI recorded.

Also more women than men are accepting treatment for obesity and weight management in primary care, although those men that do enter a treatment programme do effectively lose weight.

It seems the issue of weight fails to be addressed with men by the GP, or men are against seeking advice, or are unaware of the need.

According to a leading Professor in men's health, Alan White from Leeds Metropolitan University, a number of different factors affect men's attitudes and behaviour to health.

- Young men are more intent on putting on weight to meet the image of the perfect shape
- Overweight men perceive 'being bigger' as 'healthier'
- Men are less likely to see themselves as overweight
- If they do recognise they are overweight, they are less likely to seek professional help.

GENDER DIFFERENCES AND FOOD CHOICE

Research carried out on the gender differences in food choice and the contribution of health beliefs and dieting, by Professor Jane Wardle and Colleagues from University College London may help explain why different approaches are required to engage men in their weight and health.

They found that women were more likely than men to report avoiding-high-fat foods, eating fruit and fibre, and limiting salt (to a lesser extent). Health beliefs explained 40% of the differences in dietary behaviour.

Key Facts; Men & Obesity

Measure	Fact ¹	
Body mass index (BMI)	43.4% overweight	22.1% obese
Waist Circumference	Average 97.6cm	31% >102cm
Critical age period for weight gain	25 to 34 years	

¹ Dept. of Health, Health Survey for England 2003 (The Stationery Office, London 2004)

² BMI: Overweight, 25-29.9; Obese, >30

³ Waist circumference: >94cm raised risks of ill health, >102cm even greater health risks

KEY POINT

Gender differences in food choices can be partly explained by women's greater likelihood of dieting and their stronger beliefs in healthy eating.

Aiming to promote healthy eating practices to men, and understanding the difference in health beliefs are crucial to targeting men effectively.

THE PROBLEM!

A fundamental problem is that most advice is targeted towards women especially when it is provided by media or commercial organisations.

Men also tend to lack knowledge and understanding about the health implications of being overweight.

Men are less likely to be concerned about becoming overweight, more likely to fail to notice that they have gained weight, and more likely to deny that they have a weight problem.

IN PRACTICE!

It is essential that strategies are developed to improve male knowledge and awareness of health and obesity. It appears that the way in which men are approached is crucial to engaging them in taking responsibility for their own health. The good news is there are a number of male-sensitive initiatives already in practice for men and weight management in a variety of settings. This includes community-based services, in the workplace, commercial programmes, media-based and also age-specific projects for younger boys and teenagers in schools, and older men (over 65 years).

A recent conference held by The Men's Health Forum reported many practical examples of tackling men's weight in the UK . A few examples are;

- Weight management clinics held in 'male dominated environments' e.g. the back of a barbershop or a Harley-Davidson show room
- 'Weigh in without women' based in NHS Lanarkshire, includes men only cookery classes
- Occupational based – MOT's in the workplace e.g. at lorry ports!
- WaistWatchers, a work place and community based programme in North Derbyshire

CONCLUSION - TACKLING MALE WEIGHT PROBLEMS

The difficult part is actually increasing male awareness of health and weight. Once men are engaged there are a number of male sensitive approaches that can be implemented including:

- Online support systems
- Provision of information rather than 'counselling', for example give men the 'health' numbers (BMI, blood pressure, blood cholesterol, glucose)
- Provide access to evidenced- based health literature (books, leaflets, internet-based)
- Workplace initiatives
- Male-specific weight management programmes



RESEARCH ROUND-UP

A round-up of the latest research of interest published on overweight/obesity and weight management, including Weight Concern's opinion on the practical implications.

'GREENER ENVIRONMENTS' MAY HELP REDUCE LEVELS OF OBESITY

Higher levels of greenery and lower levels of graffiti and litter in residential areas are associated with people being more physically active and 40% less likely to be overweight and obese. A recent study published in the BMJ Online was one of the first conducted to objectively measure levels of incivilities, such as litter and graffiti, with levels of physical activity and rates of overweight and obesity. Data analysed from a large housing and health survey conducted in eight European cities captured information on height and weight (giving body mass index) and self-reported levels of physical activity. Surveyors then assessed the immediate residential environment, including the amount of graffiti, litter, and dog mess, as well as the level of vegetation and greenery visible on the dwelling and streets surrounding it.

Respondents whose residential environment contained high levels of incivilities were about 50% more likely to be overweight or obese, and their physical activity levels were lower.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATION:

The findings from this study emphasise the importance of addressing changes to the environments we live in to promote activity and reduce weight. This highlights that it is critical for health promotion experts, urban architects, city planners and local councils to work together to promote a healthier residential environment.

Source: Graffiti, greenery, and obesity in adults: secondary analysis of European cross sectional survey. Ellaway et al. Aug. 2005. online BMJ, available at http://bmj.bmjournals.com/onlinefirst_date.shtml

INACTIVE TIME AT WORK LINKED TO OBESITY

Sitting for more than 5 hours a day at work increases risk of being overweight in men

The extent to which sedentary time at work contributes to overweight and obesity continues to be investigated. A large cross-sectional study of 1600 Australian adults in full-time employment found that on average people sat for more than 3 hours/day at work and men for significantly more time than women. Analysis found that inactivity (as measured by sitting time at work) was higher among overweight/obese individuals than participants in the healthy weight range. Further analysis showed that 1 in 4 sat for more than 6 hours (360mins) a day as part of their job.

The study found that men who sit for extended periods at work are more likely to have a BMI greater than 25, even if they are physically active in their leisure time. This relationship was not found in the women of this sample. This suggests that even people who may be meeting the recommended guidelines for physical activity (30 mins per day of moderate intensity exercise at least 5 days a week) may not be doing enough to prevent obesity if they have long sitting hours at work.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATION:

The modern working environment, packed full of labour-saving technology, reduces incidental activity, and with it the energy expenditure required to maintain a healthy body weight. Interventions to reduce sitting time in the workplace need to be considered in prevention strategies for obesity.

Source: Occupational Sitting Time and Overweight and Obesity in Australian Workers. Mummery W.K, et al. Am J Prev Med, 2005;29(2):91-97

CANCER RISKS AND OBESITY

Increased risk of certain cancers is linked to being overweight or obese

Much attention has focused on the role of obesity in the development of coronary heart disease (CHD), but the link to cancer is less well publicised.

A recent paper looked at the cause of death of 18,403 London-based male government employees and found there were over 3,000 cancer deaths. The results showed there was a raised risk of death from cancer of the rectum, bladder, colon, and liver, and for lymphoma in men who were obese or overweight in comparison to those of a normal weight.

A possible explanation of the obesity/overweight cancer relation is the role of insulin and insulin-like growth factors. It is suggested that obesity precipitates insulin resistance; the prolonged increase in levels of insulin is thought to act a tumour growth promoter.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATION:

It is important to raise the awareness of the increased risk of certain cancers and obesity. The importance of achieving and maintaining a healthier body weight may reduce the risk of developing some cancers in adult life.

Source: Obesity and overweight in relation to organ-specific cancer mortality in London (UK): findings from the original Whitehall study. Batty. GD. et al. International Journal of Obesity, 2005;1-8

OBESOGENIC FOOD ADVERTISING AND CHILDHOOD OBESITY

Advertising of junk food is strongly associated with excess body weight in children

Evidence of a link between food advertising to children and the risk of being overweight is emerging. Data was used from surveys of advertising on children's television and estimates of the prevalence of overweight among children in the USA, Australia, and eight European countries.

The data shows evidence of an association between the broadcasting of advertisements (measured in quantity per hour) during children's television programmes and the proportion of children overweight. Also the nature of the advertisement shows a links with body weight, with advertising of sweet and fatty foods strongly associated with excess body weight, whilst the advertising of healthier foods appearing to be mildly protective against excess body weight.

This suggests that advertising does have an effect on children, however it does not support the notion that advertising alone leads to behaviours causing weight gain.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATION:

Public policies to limit children's exposure to these advertisements need to be considered, as part of general strategies to halt the rise of child obesity.

Source: Evidence of a possible link between obesogenic food advertising and child overweight. Lobstein. T. & Dobb. S. Obesity Reviews, 2005;6:203-208

WEIGHT CONCERN NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT

Weight Concern welcomes donations to support our work into the research and delivery of treatments to help fight the obesity epidemic. Any amount, however small, please send to this address:

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WRITE TO US

We hope you have enjoyed reading this newsletter. Any feedback, comments and opinions would be gratefully received. Please email Alison Chipperfield:

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