



Healthmatters Obesity and the food environment



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1. The scale of the problem

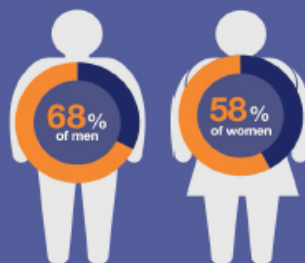
Nearly two-thirds of adults in England were classed as being overweight (a body mass index of over 25) or obese (a BMI of over 30) in 2015.

28% of children aged 2 to 15 are overweight or obese and younger generations are becoming obese at earlier ages and staying obese for longer.

It is estimated that obesity is responsible for more than 30,000 deaths each year.

Reducing obesity, particularly among children, is one of Public Health England's priorities. PHE aims to increase the proportion of children leaving primary school with a healthy weight, accompanied by reductions in levels of excess weight in adults.

In 2015
63%
of adults in England
were **overweight
or obese**



In England, the prevalence of obesity among adults rose from 14.9% to 26.9% between 1993 and 2015

Of every
100 adults
in England
there are...



under
weight



healthy
weight



over-
weight



obese



morbidly
obese



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2. The costs of obesity

Failing to address the challenge posed by the obesity epidemic will place an even greater burden on NHS resources.

Obese people are:

- at increased risk of certain cancers, including being 3 times more likely to develop colon cancer
- more than two and a half times more likely to develop high blood pressure - a risk factor for heart disease
- 5 times more likely to develop type 2 diabetes

Obesity can harm people's prospects in life, their self-esteem and their underlying mental health.



The economic costs of obesity

Obesity costs the wider society
£27 billion



The NHS in England spent an estimated
£6.1 billion
on overweight and obesity-related ill-health in 2014/15

We spend **more** each year on the treatment of obesity and diabetes than we do on the **police, fire service and judicial system combined**





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3. Food and drink environment

The evidence base for eating a healthy diet is compelling, and ignoring this advice increases the chances of becoming obese.

But many people still find it difficult to eat healthily. This is primarily because we are living in an obesogenic environment where less than healthier choices are the default, which encourage excess weight gain and obesity.

The increasing consumption of out-of-home meals – that are often cheap and readily available at all times of the day - has been identified as one of the main factors contributing to rising levels of obesity.

PHE estimated in 2014 that there were over 50,000 fast food and takeaway outlets in England.

More than a **quarter of adults** **27%** and **one fifth of children** eat food from **out of home food outlets** at least once a week



Meals eaten outside of the home tend to be associated with higher intakes of **sugar, fat, and salt** and portion sizes tend to be bigger



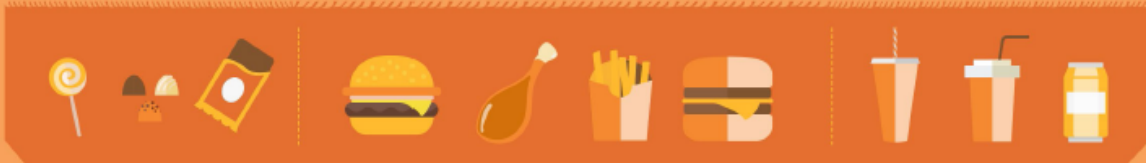
The increasing consumption of out-of-home meals has been identified as an important factor contributing to **rising levels of obesity**

Food outlets increasingly cluster around schools



18%

of meals were eaten out of the home in 2015, up 5% on 2014





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4. Ways to encourage healthier eating

Understanding the limitations to offering healthier food and drinks is vital to the development of healthier interventions. For example, food outlets in low-income areas can face particular barriers to offering healthier food and drink choices such as highly competitive, price-sensitive markets, and a real or perceived lack of demand for healthier food and drink

An increasing number of local councils have developed healthier catering initiatives in recent years.

They frequently draw on behavioural economics, seeking to nudge consumers in the direction of making healthier choices through, for example, encouraging the sale of food in smaller containers or the placing of healthier drinks at eye level.

By gradually making the following simple changes, local authorities can help businesses help their customers make healthier choices



Reduce portion size



Reduce fats & frying practices



Reduce salt



Reduce sugar



Increase the content of fruit, vegetables and fibre



Promote healthier options



Procuring healthier ingredients and food products from suppliers



Provide calorie information



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5. Collaborative action

The PHE out of homes food provision toolkit has been created to help local authorities across England work with smaller food outlets such as:

- takeaways
- restaurants
- bakers
- sandwich and coffee shops
- mobile traders
- market stalls
- corner shops
- leisure centres
- children's centres and private nurseries

PHE's healthier catering guidance for different types of businesses supports the toolkit and provides tips on providing and promoting healthier food and drink for children and families.

3 step guide to putting PHE's strategies for encouraging healthier out of home food provision toolkit into practice

