



Obesity

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Health risk and costs of obesity

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Obesity is one of the major public health issues in the developing world. It can lead to increased risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers.

Around 58% of type 2 diabetes, 21% of heart disease and between 8% and 42% of certain cancers (endometrial, breast, and colon) are attributable to excess body fat. Obesity is responsible for 9,000 premature deaths each year in England, and reduces life expectancy by, on average, 9 years.

Obese people are more likely to suffer from social and psychological problems, such as depression, prejudice, discrimination, stigmatization and low self-esteem.

Obesity has serious economic costs. It has been estimated that the cost of obesity to the NHS is approximately £1 billion per year, with an additional £2.3b - £2.6b per year to the economy as a whole. If the current trend is not halted, Wanless estimated that by 2010 the cost to the economy alone could be £3.6b per year.

The National Audit Office (NAO) has predicted that one million fewer obese people in this country could lead to around 15,000 fewer people with coronary heart disease, 34,000 fewer people developing type 2 diabetes, and 99,000 fewer people with high blood pressure.

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