

SUGARS MAKE YOU FAT

We are getting bigger. On average, adults get 0.8kg (1.7 pounds) heavier every year. My job is to help you to believe that you can stop this happening. And to show you how it can be done. Game on.

But why bother? We don't need to impress anyone with our athletic figures once we have settled down. We all have more important things to worry about, don't we? What harm can a few pounds do?

We all now accept that stopping smoking puts 7 years on the average smoker's life. Stopping smoking is a lifestyle change that puts quality into lives as well as quantity. Changing diet and exercise habits is proven to give similar benefits in saving lives and improving lives. Bingo.

Oh, you want some numbers? Well, let's talk about the benefit of just maintaining your weight: you will halve your chances of breaking your hip, drastically cut down your chances of suffering with arthritis (having a BMI* over 35 increases your risk of osteoarthritis 14 times) and enormously reduces your risk of cancer (40% less colon cancer and 20% less breast cancer).

If you are already overweight, it's never too late to improve things. Dropping your BMI* by 1 point will reduce your risk of diabetes by 14%. Losing 15kg would cure most type 2 diabetics. Losing 5kg can stop people with pre-diabetes getting type 2 diabetes. Losing weight is more useful at controlling high blood pressure than taking medication.

Exercise is as good as giving up smoking in improving our health. It protects against heart and lung disease, type 2 diabetes, breast and colon cancer. It doesn't always work. But it reduces your chances of dying prematurely by 30%. And your extra years are more likely to be healthy ones.

So, how can we help you to find the Holy Grail? That is, to be fitter, not fatter. Just by making it do-able.

Which diet should you choose? The one that you can stick to, is the quick answer. The Mediterranean diet has the best evidence for health benefits. The Low GI diet makes a lot of sense for people who have, or are prone to having, type 2 diabetes. The Fast diet (the 5:2 diet) is very appealing, because it gives good results for weight loss and is easy for people to do, and to stick with.

Watch out for hidden calories. In non-diet or alcoholic drinks or processed foods for example. Having the support of a programme makes a big difference. Be that "Move to improve", "Weight-watchers" or "Slimmers world" or from a dietician. Eat more fruit and veg and cook more of your own meals. Hidden sugars in food and drink are probably more dangerous than fats.

How can you be more active? Try to make it fun. A smartphone app can keep an eye on your activities. A pedometer does a similar job. Plan to watch less TV (e.g. no more than 1 hour a day) and to spend less time on computers or games. Unless you can put an exercise machine in front of the TV or play an interactive game. Stand up during the ad breaks and do a few chores (e.g. wash the dishes or put the rubbish out).



Our nurses can help you, or can refer you for support. The "Move to improve programme" can help you if your BMI is 28 or more and you have another long term health problem. Other programmes exist to support you. Sometimes you may be prescribed a medication, Orlistat. Orlistat reduces the amount of fat that you absorb from food. If you carry on eating too much fat it will cause you to have nasty greasy loose stool. Sometimes you may be offered surgery. Surgery can be very effective at helping you to lose weight and sorting out your type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and sleep apnoea. But surgery has some risks.

* Your Body Mass Index, or BMI, is a measure of how healthy your weight is. It is calculated by dividing your weight (in kilogrammes) by your height (in metres) squared. $\text{Weight}/(\text{height})^2$.

BMI

less than 18.5	underweight
18.5-25	normal
25-29.9	overweight
30-34.9	obesity 1
35-39.9	obesity 2
40 and over	obesity 3