



Are we an 'obese society'?

After the overindulgence of Christmas, many people see the New Year as an opportunity for self-improvement. Weight loss is one of the most common New Year health resolutions, this week we will take a look at the obesity crisis Britain is facing.

FACTS

One in four British adults is obese, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, prompting fears that the UK has become the “fat man of Europe”.

The 2013 report says:

Obesity levels in the UK have more than trebled in the last 30 years and, on current estimates, more than half the population could be obese by 2050.

The cause of the rapid rise in obesity has been blamed on our modern lifestyles, including the prevalence of the car, TVs, computers, desk-bound jobs and high-calorie food.

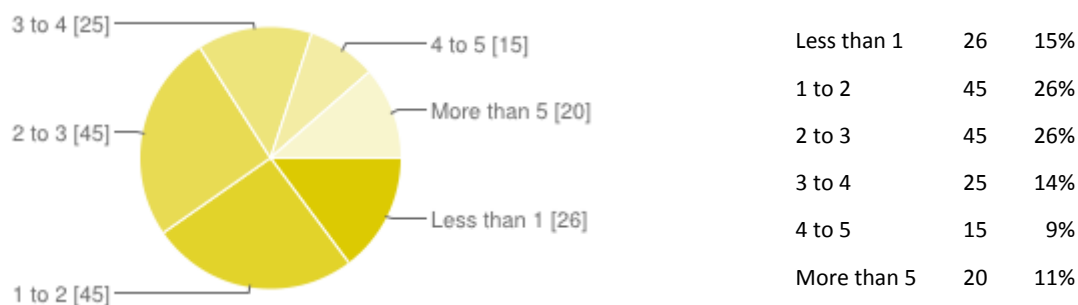
Europe's obesity league

- UK: 24.9%
- Ireland: 24.5%
- Spain: 24.1%
- Portugal: 21.6%
- Germany: 21.3%
- Belgium: 19.1%
- Austria: 18.3%
- Italy: 17.2%
- Sweden: 16.6%
- France: 15.6%

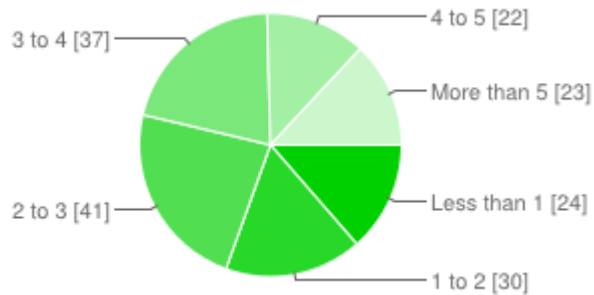
Source: The State of Food and Agriculture 2013 (PDF, 2.44Mb), United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization.

The following graphs show results from a recent questionnaire with Sharples pupils asking them how physically active they are:

On average, how many hours each day do you spend watching TV or in front of a computer?



Excluding your PE lessons, approximately how many hours per week are you physically active (excluding walking)?



Less than 1	24	14%
1 to 2	30	17%
2 to 3	41	23%
3 to 4	37	21%
4 to 5	22	12%
More than 5	23	13%

The graphs illustrate that many of our pupils are leading sedentary lifestyles and if these habits continue, obesity could be a real concern for many of our pupils. 34% of our pupils spend more than 3 hours a day in front of a screen and amazingly 13% spend as long on technology as they spend in school. However, when asked how many hours they exercise outside of their PE lessons the hours were a lot lower. Worryingly, 54% of our pupils do less than 3 hours of exercise although the NHS states that young people aged between 5 and 18 should do 60 minutes each day. Indeed, for 14% of pupils questioned a physical education lessons is pretty much the only physical activity they do. This raises real concerns for many of our pupils when they leave school and will not receive their physical education any more.

What are the consequences for our pupils if they become overweight and obese?

Compared with a healthy weight man, an obese man is:

- five times more likely to develop type 2 diabetes
- three times more likely to develop cancer of the colon
- more than two and a half times more likely to develop high blood pressure – a major risk factor for stroke and heart disease

An obese woman, compared with a healthy weight woman, is:

- almost 13 times more likely to develop type 2 diabetes
- more than four times more likely to develop high blood pressure
- more than three times more likely to have a heart attack

A BMI of 30 to 35 has been found to reduce life expectancy by an average of three years, while a BMI of over 40 reduced longevity by eight to 10 years, which is equivalent to a lifetime of smoking.

Obesity has been blamed for about 30,000 deaths a year in the UK, 9,000 of those taking place before retirement age.

Alongside disease, obesity can affect peoples' ability to get and hold down work, their self-esteem and their wellbeing and mental health.

Most people who become obese put on weight gradually between the ages of 20 and 40, but there is some suggestion that the **path is set in early childhood**.

“Overweight children are more likely to become overweight adults,”

(Susan Jebb, professor of diet and population health at the University of Oxford).

Top Tips for parents:

Show your child this section and others published by the school on health and well-being; the more educated our pupils are on diet and exercise the better decisions pupils are likely to make in their life.

Sit down and talk to your child if you are concerned about their weight and inactive lifestyle.

Review your child's diet and how it can be improved (more information to come on diet in future reviews).

Create an environment that encourages healthier eating and physical activity. For individuals and families, it means eating less and moving more.

Encourage your child to attend extra-curricular clubs.

Encourage your child to find a hobby outside of school that involves being physically active.

Limit the amount of time spent in front of screens each day.

Try and set the right example as a parent- we act as major influences if they are going to lead healthy lifestyles.

Encourage your child to start taking responsibility for their own health.

References:

www.nhs.co.uk/livewell