

MANAGING WEIGHT AND OBESITY

GUIDANCE NOTE FOR TRANSPORT WORKERS

Overweight and obesity are defined as abnormal or excessive fat accumulation that presents a risk to health. Body mass index (BMI) is a simple index that is commonly used to classify overweight and obesity in adults. It is defined as a person's weight in kilograms divided by the square of his height in meters (kg/m²). A person with a BMI of 30 or more is generally considered obese and BMI equal to or more than 25 is considered overweight.

KEY FACTS

- Obesity is preventable by proper weight management.
- The worldwide prevalence of obesity nearly tripled between 1975 and 2016.
- In 2016, more than 1.9 billion adults, 18 years and older, were overweight. Of these over 650 million were obese.
- Obesity and overweight can lead to physical and mental health problems.
- Simple practical measures can help to manage weight.
- Obesity and overweight can lead to gastroesophageal reflux, urinary stress incontinence and infertility.
- Obesity can also affect your quality of life and lead to psychological problems, such as depression, anxiety and low self-esteem.
- Sleep disturbance like apnoea and breathing problems are associated and commonly linked to obesity.

WHY IS MANAGING WEIGHT IMPORTANT?

- Obesity increases the risk of cardiovascular diseases and stroke.
- Obesity and overweight increases the risk of type 2 diabetes;
- Musculoskeletal disorders, especially osteoarthritis – a highly disabling degenerative disease of the joints are more common among overweight people.
- Many of the cancers including endometrial, breast, ovarian, prostate, liver, gallbladder, kidney, and colon are linked to obesity.

REASONS FOR OBESITY AND OVERWEIGHT

- Obesity does not happen overnight. It develops gradually over time, as a result of poor diet and lifestyle choices
- The fundamental cause of obesity and being overweight is an energy imbalance between calories consumed and calories expended due to increased intake of energy-dense foods that are high in fat and sugars.
- The average physically active man needs about 2,500 calories and woman 2000 calories a day to maintain a healthy weight.
- Lack of physical activity is another important factor related to obesity.

- Some rare genetic conditions that can cause obesity. There is no reason why most people cannot lose weight.
- Underlying medical conditions like underactive thyroid gland (hypothyroidism) may contribute to weight gain. However, if these conditions are properly diagnosed and treated, they should pose less of a barrier to weight loss.
- Certain medicines, including some corticosteroids, medications for epilepsy, diabetes and mental illness can contribute to weight gain.
- Starchy carbohydrates should make up just over a third of the food you eat. They include potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and cereals. Choose higher fibre or wholegrain varieties, such as whole-wheat pasta, brown rice or potatoes with their skins on.
- Cut down on saturated fat, which is found in many foods, such as fatty cuts of meat, sausages, butter cheese, processed food. When you are having meat, choose lean cuts and cut off any visible fat. Choose foods with unsaturated fats such as vegetable oils and spreads, oily fish.

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR MANAGING WEIGHT

- There is no single rule that applies to everyone, but to lose weight at a safe and sustainable rate of 0.5 to 1kg a week, most people are advised to reduce their energy intake by 600 calories a day.
- Swap unhealthy and high-energy food choices – such as fast food, processed food and sugary drinks (including alcohol) – for healthier choices.
- Eat at least five portions of a variety of fruit and veg every day. They can be fresh, frozen, canned, dried or juiced.
- Avoid crash dieting. Trying to lose weight quickly by crash dieting carries number of risks including of new health problems, vitamin deficiency and so on.
- Engage in regular physical activity. Exercise greatly increases your chance of long-term weight loss.
- Behaviour modification program can help you make lifestyle changes, lose weight, and keep it off. Steps to take include examining your current habits to find out what factors, stresses or situations may have contributed to your obesity. It also includes setting realistic weight loss goals.
- Although variety of over-the-counter and prescription weight loss drugs are available, it is always better to consult a doctor or nutritionists before taking any of them.

You can be in touch with the ITF through free ITF Wellbeing app or ITF Wellbeing Facebook page to get guidance on managing weight.



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Contact us by email or Facebook

Email: wellbeing@itf.org.uk

Facebook: [@itfwellbeing](https://www.facebook.com/itfwellbeing)