

Obesity – Scotland | Introduction

IN 2010 the Scottish Government published *Preventing Overweight and Obesity: A Route Map Towards a Healthier Weight* ([Scottish Government, 2010](#)). The information below is taken from that document.

Scotland has one of the highest levels of obesity amongst the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries.

By 2030 it is predicted that adult obesity in Scotland could reach over 40% (even with current health improvement measures).

The Scottish Government estimate that the direct cost of obesity to NHS Scotland will almost double by 2030, with a cost to the overall economy of up to £3 billion (in 2007/08 prices).

The consequences of obesity reflect, perpetuate and potentially increase Scotland's health, social and economic inequalities.

Obesity – Scotland | Facts

Adults:

- ❑ 27.1% of adults are obese, whilst 64.6% are overweight.
- ❑ Men (68.3%) are more likely than women (61%) to be overweight, whilst women (29.3%) are more likely than men (24.9%) to be obese.
- ❑ Between 1995 and 2008, there was a 10.2% increase in overweight or obese adults, although figures have been broadly stable since then.
- ❑ Prevalence of overweight & obesity increases with age – e.g. 35.7% amongst adults aged 16-24, rising to 76.8% of those aged 55-64. However, the sharpest increase is between the 16-24 and 25-34 age groups.

Children:

- ❑ 28.8% of children (aged 2-15 years) are overweight, with 16% obese.
- ❑ Boys (30.9%) are more likely than girls (26.6%) to be overweight or obese.
- ❑ At age 2-6, 27.5% of children are obese, whilst by ages 12-15, there is an increase to 36.1%.

All of the above facts are taken from: [Scottish Health Survey 2013](#).

Obesity – Scotland | Guidance

Clinical and public health guidelines from the [Scottish Intercollegiate Guidance Network](#) (SIGN) and [Scottish Health Technologies Group](#) (SHTG) – parts of NHS Quality Improvement Scotland. Some overlap with guidance issued by National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE).

❑ SIGN 115 '[Management of Obesity](#)' (2010): recommendations on the prevention and treatment of obesity within the clinical setting, in children, young people and adults.

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| Interventions – Population Level

- ❑ The Scottish Government believes obesity cannot be tackled only by relying on individuals to change their behaviour. Factors contributing to weight gain (e.g. poor diet and lack of physical activity) are interwoven into the fabric of contemporary lifestyles.
- ❑ It is important that we therefore look to make changes to our living environments, in order to shift it from one that promotes weight gain to one that supports healthy choices and healthy weight.
- ❑ In 2010, national and local government in Scotland launched a joint long-term obesity strategy, '[Preventing Overweight and Obesity in Scotland: A Route Map towards Healthy Weight](#)'. The route map identified four key areas in which action is likely to have the greatest effect. These were:
 - Reducing demand for, and consumption of, excessive amounts of high calorie foods and drinks;
 - Increasing opportunities for uptake of walking, cycling and other physical activity;
 - Establishing long-life habits in children; and
 - Increasing the responsibility of organisations for the health and wellbeing of their employees.

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| Interventions – Community Level

- ❑ The Scottish Government supports [Active Scotland](#), which helps individuals to answer the question: “how do I get active?”. It signposts them to easy exercises, sports clubs in their local area or activities they can enjoy with their friends and family.
- ❑ In June 2014, in partnership with local authorities, the Scottish Government published ‘[Beyond the School Gate](#)’, a guidance document for local authorities, schools, caterers and retailers on what they can do to positively influence the food environment around schools and support healthy choices amongst pupils.
- ❑ [Community Food and Health \(Scotland\)](#) aims to ensure everyone in Scotland has the opportunity, ability and confidence to have a healthy diet, by supporting work with low-income communities to address barriers to healthy and affordable food.

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| Interventions – Individual Level

Prevention:

- ❑ Adoption of a healthy lifestyle is crucial to weight management and the prevention of obesity. Regular physical activity and a healthy diet are significant components of this, and the Scottish Government is committed to **providing the information and opportunities required for people to make healthy choices**. For example, to encourage positive behaviour change and a healthy diet amongst schools pupils:
 - The Curriculum for Excellence (the school curriculum which education authorities in Scotland must deliver) specifies clear outcomes for learners regarding food and nutrition.
 - The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007, and the Nutritional Requirements for Food and Drink in Schools (Scotland) Regulations 2008, set the nutritional standards of food provided to children in schools.

Treatment:

- ❑ An obesity treatment *Good Practice Guide* ([Scottish Government, 2012](#)) has been developed by the National Planning Forum to help NHS Boards deliver safe and effective obesity treatment services.
- ❑ The choice of treatment option for weight loss is a clinical decision, which individuals are encouraged to discuss with their GP and/or consultant.

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| Outcome Measures

□ Prevention of Obesity Route Map: Indicators

- A set of 16 indicators are being used to monitor progress towards the goals described in the Obesity Route Map Action Plan ([Scottish Government, 2010](#)); categorised as long, intermediate, or short-term; and assessed either nationally or at Health Board or local authority level.
- The indicators include for example:
 - Average intake of fat , average intake of sugar, numbers meeting activity guidelines.
 - Number of businesses securing [Healthy Living Award](#).
 - Sales of sugary soft drinks and confectionery.
 - Levels of active travel to work and school.
- See the latest Scottish Government Statistical Bulletin: [Obesity Indicators 2014](#)

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| Examples of Good Practice

- The [Football Fans in Training](#) project offers a weight loss programme for overweight middle-aged men – a group which contributes significantly to Scotland’s obesity rate, but which is unlikely to access either NHS or commercial weight loss services. The project uses participants’ wider interests (loyalty as a football fan) to engage them in physical activity and other positive behaviour change that is beneficial for their health.
 - The project is fully evaluated by the University of Glasgow, with funding from the National Institute for Health Research. Best practice award received from Public Health Agency of Canada.

- The [Healthy Living Award](#) works with food outlets and the catering industry to encourage sales of healthy eating options. Since its introduction in 2006, over 2000 businesses have been engaged in achieving the award’s criteria for retailers: based on the principles of a healthy balanced diet and appropriate sales, promotion and marketing activity.
 - The award provides public recognition of the nutritional value of the retailers’ ingredients and preparation methods, and has been found to be at least cost neutral, offering a potential financial incentive for the business to encourage healthy eating.