

Guidance

Wales: Obesity

Part of the 5 nations programme on obesity.

Contents

[Introduction](#)

[Facts about obesity in Wales](#)

[Guidance](#)

[Interventions](#)

[Measuring outcomes](#)

[Examples of good practice](#)

Introduction

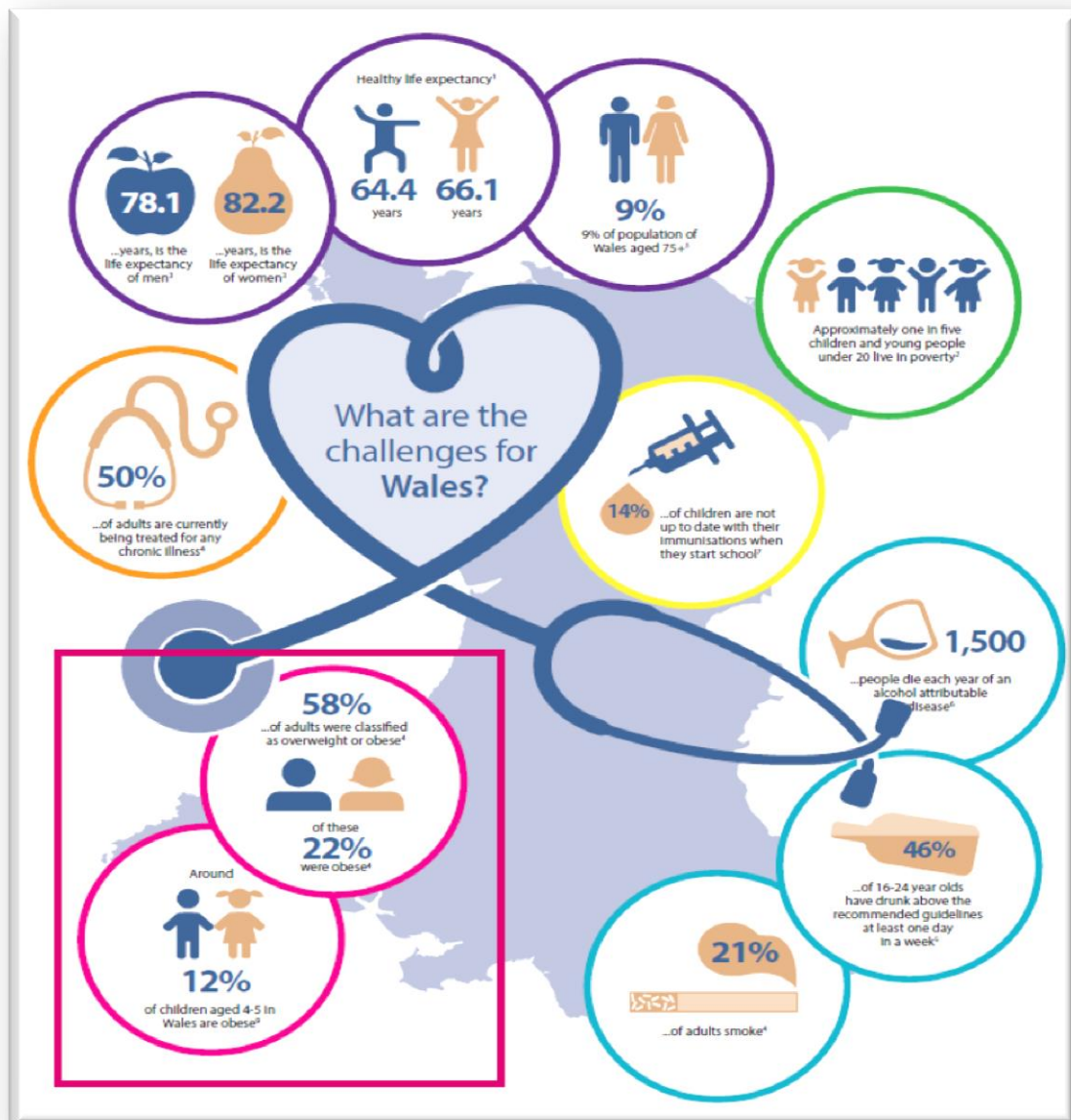
Almost two thirds (58%) of adults are overweight or obese according to the Welsh Health Survey ([WHS, 2013](#)).

More than 1 in 4 children in Wales has a Body Mass Index (BMI) classified as overweight or obese, compared to 1 in 5 in England ([CMP, 2013/14](#)).

Rising obesity levels are a major contributor to increases in population health risk. As population health risks get worse, the cost of NHS treatments increases.

There are direct costs to health services arising from obesity – the Welsh Government published a report in 2011 which concluded that “obesity is estimated to cost the NHS in Wales over £73 million, which increases to nearly £86 million if obese and overweight people are included. In 2008/09, between more than £1.40 million and £1.65 million was spent each week treating diseases resulting from obesity, which amounted to between £25 and £29 per person in Wales and between 1.3% and 1.5% of total healthcare expenditure in Wales” ([WG, 2011](#)).

Obesity is associated with multiple health risks, increasing the risk of type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, some cancers, osteoarthritis and depression ([CMP, 2013/14](#)).



¹ Healthy life expectancy 2008-2012 Data sourced from 'Our Healthy Future Indicators 2015' Public Health Wales

² More than one in five children and young people under 20 live in poverty (22%) Data sourced from 'Children and Young People's profile, 2010' Public Health Wales

³ Data sourced from 'Office for National Statistics' 2009-2013'

⁴ Data sourced from 'Welsh Health Survey' Welsh Government

⁵ 45.5% of 16-24 year olds who reported drinking above the recommended guidelines on at least one day in the previous week, 2008-2011 Data sourced from 'Health of Children and Young People in Wales, Public Health Wales Observatory 2013'

⁶ Data sourced from 'Alcohol Profile 2014' Public Health Wales

⁷ Data sourced from '2010/11 - 2014/15, Pregnancy and childhood surveillance tool 2016' Public Health Wales

⁸ Data sourced from 'UK nations 2014 - Office for National Statistics'

⁹ Data sourced from 'Childhood Measurement Programme (Public Health Wales) and Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) (Welsh Government)'

Facts about obesity in Wales

All of the facts below are taken from the [World Health Organization's \(WHO\) factsheet](#) on overweight and obesity.

Overweight and obesity are defined as abnormal or excessive fat accumulation that may impair health.

BMI is a simple index of weight-for-height 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). The WHO definition is: a BMI greater than or equal to 25 is overweight, a BMI greater than or equal to 30 is obesity.

Overweight and obesity are leading risks for deaths internationally. 44% of the diabetes burden, 23% of the ischaemic heart disease burden and between 7% and 41% of certain cancer burdens are attributable to overweight and obesity.

The fundamental cause of obesity and overweight is an energy imbalance between calories consumed and calories expended. Nationally and internationally there has been an increased intake of energy-dense foods that are high in fat; and an increase in physical inactivity due to the increasingly sedentary nature of many forms of work, changing modes of transportation, and increasing urbanization.

Guidance

[All Wales Obesity Pathway](#) Describes 4 tiers of intervention that health boards are required to have in place for children and adults.

These include:

- level 1: community based prevention and early intervention
- level 2: community and primary care weight management services
- level 3: specialist multi-disciplinary team weight management services
- level 4: specialist medical and surgical service

A level 3 service specification and access criteria for specialist multi-disciplinary team weight management services clarifies the minimum service requirements for developing services for adults in Wales.

In addition, a level 3 service specification and access criteria for specialist multi-disciplinary team weight management services for children and young people is under development.

NICE guidance

[CG189: Obesity: identification, assessment and management of overweight and obesity in children, young people and adults](#) (2014)

Evidence-based advice on the care and treatment of obesity.

[PH47: Managing overweight and obesity among children and young people](#)

Recommendations on lifestyle and weight management (sometimes called tier 2) services for overweight and obese children and young people under 18 years of age. These services are just one part of a comprehensive approach to preventing and treating obesity. In Wales, an approach to deliver level 2 services locally is being progressed

[PH46: BMI: preventing ill health and premature death in black, Asian and other minority ethnic groups](#)

Guidance is aimed to determine whether lower cut-off points should be used for black, Asian and other minority ethnic groups in the UK as a trigger for lifestyle interventions to prevent conditions such as diabetes, myocardial infarction or stroke.

[PH27: Weight management before, during and after pregnancy](#)

Aimed at NHS and other commissioners, managers and professionals who have a direct or indirect role in caring for women who are pregnant, who are planning a pregnancy or who have had a baby in the last 2 years.

[PH42: Obesity working with local communities](#) (2012)

Aims to support effective, sustainable and community-wide action to prevent obesity. It sets out how local communities, with support from local organisations and networks, can achieve this.

Interventions

Population

Policy development and sustainable solutions are priorities for addressing food poverty within the [Child poverty strategy for Wales](#).

[A Strategic Vision for Maternity Services in Wales](#) ensures that healthcare professionals provide guidance and support around weight management during pregnancy.

Sustainable development contributes towards social, environmental and cultural well-being by ensuring Local Authorities establish well-being goals through integrated community planning as set out in [The Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

[The Active Travel \(Wales\) Act 2013](#) ensures that facilities and routes for pedestrians and cyclists are continuously improved (e.g. identification of current / potential future routes and new road schemes which consider the needs of pedestrians and cyclists).

The [Transforming Health Improvement in Wales](#) reviewed health improvement activity across Wales to ensure that the best possible health outcomes are achieved through sustainable, cost effective programmes. The review recommended that these health outcomes are achieved through a systems approach to health and wellbeing, across agencies, at a national and local level.



[Population based approaches to childhood obesity prevention.](#)

Community

A national systems and settings approach to achieve large scale change for prevention and early intervention.

All relevant policies should incorporate the health agenda and contribute to the creation of an environment that supports / promotes a healthy weight.

[Change4Life Wales](#) is the Welsh Government's social marketing campaign and part of the broader response to help people to achieve and maintain a healthy body weight, to eat well and be physically active.

Every opportunity is used to provide brief advice and signposting to public health interventions / services to improve health and wellbeing, through the national [Making Every Contact Count](#) programme.

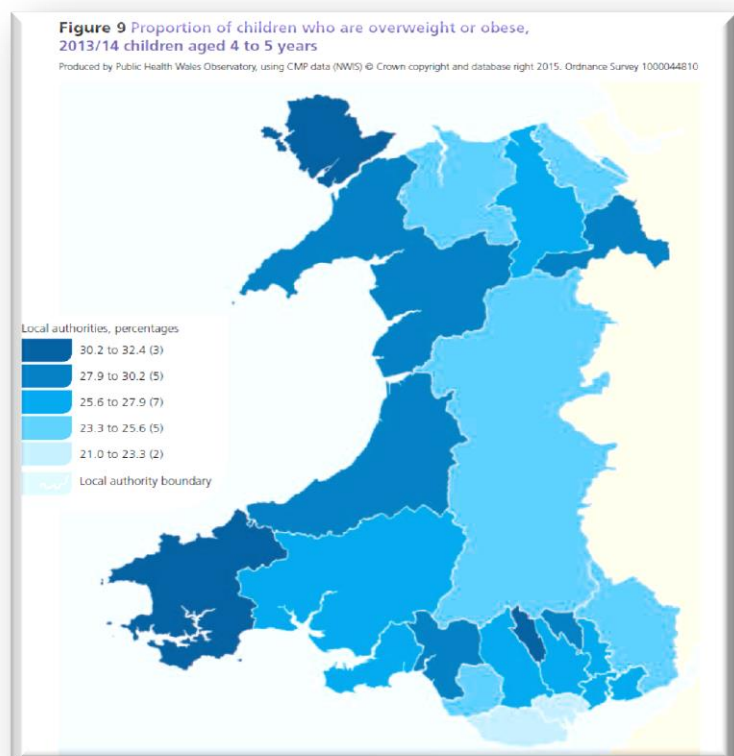
Physical activity and healthy eating are core elements of the national [Healthy Schools Scheme](#).

[Nutrition skills for life](#) is a national programme of quality assured training to develop the nutrition knowledge and skills of a wide range of community workers to enable them to support healthy eating at a community level.

[Foodwise for Life](#) is a structured evidenced based programme delivered by trained community based staff.

Obesity is a core component of the Healthy Child Wales Programme. This programme sets the strategic direction for Health Boards in Wales for the delivery of early intervention health services that are designed to ensure that children achieve optimum health.

[The Child Measurement Programme](#) for Wales is a surveillance programme that measures and weighs children aged 4-5 years to assess levels of overweight and obesity. These data are used at a national level to support local public health initiatives.



Individual and family interventions

All expectant and new parents in Wales are provided with a [Bump, Baby and Beyond](#) book which provides public health information and support around key areas including weight during pregnancy, breastfeeding and nutrition.

The NHS in Wales sets out to identify people who are overweight / obese with associated risk factors and undertakes an assessment of their motivation to change. Primary Care weight management services can be provided. Community based weight management programmes can be referred into by primary care.

Specialist weight management services (e.g., multi-disciplinary weight management clinics in the community, intermediate or secondary care; dietetic weight management programmes that incorporate physical activity and behavioural change components) can be provided.

Pharmacological interventions are initiated by physicians, supported by targeted programmes.

The [All Wales National Exercise Referral Scheme](#) sets out to improve the health and wellbeing in patients aged 16 and over at risk of chronic disease.

Measuring outcomes

The Early Years Outcome Framework is currently under development to determine the impact of current policies and programmes.

[National Child Health Database Measure](#)



In Wales, 1 in 4 children are overweight or obese by the time they start school. To help children be a healthy weight by the time they reach school, we have produced The [Ten Steps to a Healthy Weight](#).

Additional outcome measures for adults include:

- proportion of adults reported eating five or more portions of fruit and vegetables the previous day ([Welsh Health Survey](#))
- proportion of adults reported being physically active on 5 or more days in the past week ([Welsh Health Survey](#))
- proportion of adults aged 16 – 44 who are overweight or obese ([Welsh Health Survey](#))

Examples of good practice

[Transforming Health Improvement Programme](#)

In 2012 a review of all health improvement activity was taken to ensure a co-ordinated, evidence based and cost effective approach to health improvement in Wales.

[Obesity Learning Centre](#)

This contains obesity case studies showing local initiatives that tackle obesity from around the UK.

[A Good Practice Appraisal Tool for obesity prevention programmes, projects, initiatives and interventions](#) (PDF, 1.6KB, 23 pages)

This tool aims to identify programmes that can be considered good practice and can serve as an example for future initiatives that aim to improve nutrition and physical activity or prevent obesity.

[CG189: Obesity: identification, assessment and management](#)

Examples of evidence-based interventions can be found in the (2014) NICE guideline.

[Population based approaches to childhood obesity prevention](#)

International examples of good practice and what works in different settings