

# Obesity part 2 - Effects, Treatment and Prevention

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## Effects

In this section we will explore the effects that obesity has on individuals, their health risk, society and the Covid-19 pandemic.

### — Effects on individuals

As well as affecting the physical condition of an individual, obesity can also have adverse implications on mental health. The relationship between mental wellbeing and obesity is undeniably that of a two way street. Just as poor mental health can contribute to obesity, being obese can make you more prone to suffering mental illness. Factors including poor self image, lack of physical activity, and biological disruptions related to obesity all contribute to this. Nowadays stigma and pressures to be a certain body shape and size from social media can also be particularly damaging, affecting both the obese and those of a healthy weight.

Undeniably, being overweight has a significant impact on your quality of life. Therefore losing this weight not only improves your health and perhaps increases your lifespan, but can also promote your personal wellbeing. We asked an iOWNA patient who has recently been on a weightloss programme what effect losing weight had on her life and she said; 'My life has completely changed since I lost the weight: my self esteem and back pain is better. I feel like a different person'.

Additional physical effects of obesity which an individual may experience range from lethargy and breathlessness to a predisposition to other health problems such as osteoarthritis and cardiovascular disease. The list of complications is considerable; this is a difficult, yet not unchangeable, condition to live with.

#### iOWNA Gem 1

*Losing weight improves your quality of life by having a positive impact on both your health and wellbeing.*

## — How obesity impacts our disease pillars

### – Arthritis & Autoimmunity

*'Being overweight can affect your joints making it more likely to develop arthritis, more difficult to exercise to overcome the symptoms and often making it impossible to receive the right treatment such as surgery if that were necessary.'* **Dr Millicent A Stone, Consultant Rheumatologist, CEO of iOWNA.**

*'Low back pain is more common in patients who are overweight or obese. This is intuitive as excess weight places more strain upon the spine and will accelerate and aggravate degenerative changes in the joints. Losing weight will often reduce the burden of lower back pain and help to avoid more invasive treatments such as injections or surgery. If surgery is required then reducing weight significantly lowers the risks of complications in the postoperative period.'* **Dr David Bell, Consultant Neurosurgeon, Kings College Hospital**

### – Diabetes

*'Being overweight means that you are more likely to develop diabetes and if you have diabetes being overweight will make it harder to control and harder to prevent the complications of diabetes. Weight issues can be associated with other hormone disorders such as an underactive thyroid but may also be related to lifestyle and/or a familial tendency to gain weight. If overweight then losing weight can benefit your health in many ways not least by preventing or even reversing diabetes. It may be possible to do this through lifestyle changes but there are also some medications that may be worth considering.'* **Dr Steven Hurel, Consultant Endocrinologist, UCLH**

## — Effects on society

The obesity epidemic is creating pressure on NHS resources. Conditions associated with overweight and obesity cost the NHS around £6.1 billion yearly. In 2018-19, there were almost 900,000 hospital admissions related to obesity.

Alongside the significant strain on the health service, obesity also costs wider society £27 billion. There are two types of costs related to obesity:

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