

Major new campaign encourages millions to lose weight and cut COVID-19 risk

Public Health England (PHE) launches the Better Health campaign to support people to live healthier lives and reduce their risk of serious illness, including COVID-19.

Growing evidence suggests that being obese or excessively overweight puts people at greater risk of serious illness or death from COVID-19.

Nation urged to work towards a healthier weight with the support of free tools and apps to help people eat better, lose weight and get active.

The campaign will be targeted at groups most affected by obesity and is supported by a coalition of partners, including those providing weight management services.

A new national campaign is under way to encourage millions of adults to kick start their health and reduce their risk of serious illness, including COVID-19.

The campaign – unveiled as part of the government’s new Obesity Strategy – encourages adults to introduce changes that will help them work towards a healthier weight, with a suite of free tools and apps supporting people to eat better, drink less alcohol and get active. This includes a new app for the free 12-week NHS Weight Loss Plan, helping people make healthier food choices and learn skills to prevent weight gain.

The current evidence does not suggest that having excess weight increases people’s chances of contracting COVID-19. However, data shows that obese people are significantly more likely to become seriously ill and be admitted to intensive care with COVID-19 compared to those with a healthy BMI.

PHE has released a new film explaining how weight gain happens, the impact that it has on our bodies and how it increases the risk of serious diseases. The film helps people know when to act and encourages them to visit the Better Health website to find out about the available support.

Professor Kevin Fenton, London Regional Director at Public Health England:

Gaining weight often happens gradually over time and can be just the odd unhealthy habit mounting up, but extra weight puts pressure on our bodies and reduces our strength to fight off serious diseases, including COVID-19.

COVID-19 has given us a wake-up call to get our health back on track. We know how hard it can be to lose weight and keep it off – our Better Health campaign aims to make it easier for everyone to introduce changes that will help them maintain a healthy weight.

It's never too late, or too early, to make changes that will have a lasting impact on your health.

Many people have used lockdown as an opportunity to change habits and adopt healthier behaviours, yet research has shown over half the population has found it harder to stay healthy during this time. While staying active is important to help people lose weight and keep it off, improving diet is most critical as most people are consuming more calories than they need.

Alongside mass nationwide promotion, the campaign will specifically target areas and groups that are most affected by obesity and excess weight. Evidence shows that Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities are disproportionately affected by obesity as well as COVID-19.

The Better Health campaign is one of a raft of measures that have been revealed as part of the government's new Obesity Strategy.

A range of campaign partners including WW, weight watchers reimagined, Slimming World and GetSlim are offering exclusive discounts to coincide with the launch.

Visit nhs.uk/betterhealth for free tools and support to start leading a healthier lifestyle today.

The [Better Health campaign film](#) is available online.

For further information about the campaign please contact phe-pressoffice@phe.gov.uk

About the Better Health campaign

- the campaign provides access to a range of apps and tools to help people stay in shape and make healthier food choices to prevent future weight gain, including Easy Meals, Food Scanner, Couch to 5K and Active10
- the campaign will include a new 60" TV advert, digital, print and out of home advertising, radio and content across social media
- PR and partnership activity will also take place creating a moment in time for people to get behind the campaign and make a commitment to kick start their health, get active, eat better, drink less alcohol and quit smoking
- over the next few months the campaign will include wider support to help people live healthier lives, with advice on quitting smoking and how people can look after their mental health

About campaign partners

- WW, weight watchers reimagined is offering one month free on both their digital only and workshop plus digital 3-month memberships

- Slimming World is offering a £20 discount on any of its online membership packages
- Get Slim, is offering online memberships for as little as 86p per week