

Healthy Diets - Short Cases

Introduction

Most adults in the UK eat more calories than they need. It is recommended that men consume approximately 2,500 calories per day and women should have 2,000.¹ Being overweight or obese significantly increases the risk of serious but largely preventable diseases, including type two diabetes, cancer, heart and liver disease, stroke and related mental health conditions.² Obesity had an estimated financial impact on the NHS of £6.1billion in 2014/15 and this is estimated to rise to £9.7billion by 2050.³ [Expert reviewer’s comments: In the developed world, we live in an obesogenic environment with inactivity, and the overconsumption of energy dense foods.]

Innovation within the health and wellbeing industry has seen the creation of buzz-words such as “clean-eating” and the word ‘wellness’ itself. Interest in veganism has increased seven fold in the past five years.⁴ The “free-from” food market has doubled in value between 2009 and 2014.⁵ There has been a change in how healthy foods and diets are marketed with “social influencers” driving trends online and healthy food delivery services booming. The UK diet industry is worth an estimated £2 billion, with 55% of adults trying to lose weight each year. However, 95% of diets fail and most people will regain their lost weight within 1 - 5 years.⁶

New diets have the potential to “go viral” promoted by online celebrities without clear evidence for the diet. This poses a significant challenge to primary care clinicians when advising patients on their eating choices and providing concise up-to-date information at an appointment.

This module aims to cover the evidence behind some common dietary choices to help you provide key information and appropriate advice to patients. This module does not include eating disorders, malnourishment, or medical conditions that require dietary exclusions. As with other PBSGL modules, the content of this module was decided by an online discussion group of 10 members.