

Introduction

Obesity is one of the leading causes of death and disability and is associated with an increased risk of developing many chronic conditions that are familiar to primary care clinicians. Rates of obesity are rising for adults and children. The 2023 Scottish Health Survey found 32% of adults were living with obesity and 66% of adults were overweight or obese (reference 1). Similar statistics were recorded in the Health Survey for England 2022 (28% living with obesity and 64% overweight or obese) (reference 2).

Overweight and obesity are defined as an excess of body fat which presents a risk to health. A body mass index (BMI) greater than 25 is deemed overweight, and a BMI greater than 30 is deemed obese.

Obesity is a problem linked to socio-economic deprivation. In England, the prevalence of overweight and obese adults is 71.2% and 37.4% respectively in the most deprived areas, compared to 59.4% and 19.8% respectively in the least deprived areas. More statistics on obesity rates are available at: [Obesity profile: short statistical commentary, May 2025 - GOV.UK.](#)

The figures for deprived communities may become more contrasting with the least deprived areas, as the use of injectable medicines is restricted by the NHS, and private prescriptions have soared.

There are many factors involved in the increased prevalence of obesity, including lifestyle and genetic factors. There is evidence to show that

significant health benefits can be achieved even with modest weight loss and lifestyle modification.

Module aims:

- Increase awareness and knowledge of obesity and effective consulting with patients about weight problems
- Provide support and resources for dietary advice
- Improve knowledge on GLP-1 receptor agonists and their role in weight loss
- Increase awareness of private prescribing and referral, and the role of primary care
- Update knowledge on bariatric surgery and its follow-up care

[Editor's note: A complementary module on lifestyle medicine is in production at the time of this module's publication: we have not included advice on lifestyle issues such as exercise etc to avoid duplication with the lifestyle module. A module on health inequalities was published in early 2026.]