



THE BRITISH DIETETIC ASSOCIATION

The Professional Association for Registered Dietitians
5th Floor, Charles House, 148/9 Great Charles Street Queensway, Birmingham B3 3HT
Tel: 0121 200 8080 Fax: 0121 200 8081



Media Statement

27 May 2004

OBESITY

BDA response to the House of Commons Health Committee Third Report of Session 2003-04, Volume 1

The British Dietetic Association welcomes the report published today by the House of Commons Health Committee. Obesity has become an extremely serious public health problem, with around two thirds of the population now either overweight or obese. Obesity results in reduced life expectancy and is associated with many diseases, including diabetes, heart disease and some types of cancer. Now is the time for urgent action.

It is critical that a multi-faceted approach is taken in tackling the obesity problem, both in terms of prevention and treatment. We agree that there is a need for clear labelling of foods, the increased availability of healthy options – particularly in the school environment – and policies to promote increased activity.

Registered dietitians have unique and multiple skills to offer in both the treatment and prevention of obesity, they are highly trained in science and are able to give sound dietary and nutritional advice, as well as advice on behaviour change. Dietitians have clinical, educational, strategic and public health roles to play.

We agree that it is important for Primary Care Trusts to take a more active role in preventing and treating obesity and safeguarding public health. Registered dietitians in particular are in a position to play a pivotal role in tackling obesity at this level and have the skills to provide advice and training for health professionals. We also recognise that it is a chronic condition that requires comprehensive and ongoing management.

The BDA agrees that public health education campaigns directly aimed at reducing obesity through nutritional changes are important. This was the reason for launching our unique Weight Wise campaign in 2002 which initially focussed on the adult population, then in 2003 focussed on children and this year is focussing on men, promoting the message that size does matter. Our simple key messages are:

- ◆ Watch your waist size; it's time to deflate those spare tyres to reduce your health risk.
- ◆ Small changes can lead to big benefits. Choosing lower fat varieties of favourite foods, or eating smaller portions of some foods, can save on calories and help control your weight.
- ◆ Make starchy foods part of meals. Go for wholegrain breads, cereals, rice and pasta, and potatoes.

Website: <http://www.bda.uk.com>

- ◆ Super size your vegetables and fruit; aim to have five or more portions a day of a variety of vegetables, salads and fruits. Include these as snacks and with meals.
- ◆ Downsize high-calorie food and drinks, and limit fast food. Go easy on cakes, biscuits, pastries and sugary drinks.
- ◆ Eat regular, balanced meals, starting with breakfast, such as cereals with milk, and fruit.
- ◆ Be active, more often, every day to burn off those extra calories and to keep healthy, fit and trim.

Further to this, in November 2003 we launched our Weight Wise website (www.bdaweightwise.com) aimed at giving consumers impartial and practical advice and information on managing their weight. This website was created by registered dietitians with funding from the Department of Health.

We need action on obesity right now at every level and dietitians around the country will continue to use their skills and expertise both locally and nationally to work towards combating this very grave problem.

- Ends -

For further information contact:

Amanda Wynne,
National Public Relations Officer,
Direct Line Telephone: 01908 250918
Mobile: 07958 715222
e-mail: ajwynne@btopenworld.com

Jill Scott,
Weight Wise Campaign Co-ordinator,
Direct Line Telephone: 0117 968 2918,
Mobile: 07976 015096.
Email: jillscott@btopenworld.com

Notes

The British Dietetic Association, founded in 1936, is the professional Association for registered dietitians in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It is the nation's largest organisation of food and nutrition professionals with over 5,000 members. About two-thirds of members are employed in the National Health Service. The remaining members work in education, industry, research, sport settings or freelance.

Registered dietitians hold the only legally recognisable graduate qualification in nutrition and dietetics. They are experts in interpreting and translating the science of nutrition into practical ways of promoting nutritional well-being, disease treatment and the prevention of nutrition-related problems. Their advice is sound and based on current scientific evidence.

Registration, awarded by the Health Professionals Council, is an indication that a dietitian is fit to practise and is working within an agreed statement of conduct.

For further details about the British Dietetic Association, please visit our Website: www.bda.uk.com

Also, see our Weight Wise website with some great information put together by registered dietitians specifically for consumers at: www.bdaweightwise.com

Website: <http://www.bda.uk.com>