

Session 13

Losing weight, and maintaining a healthy weight

The aim of the session is to understand:

- ✓ The health risks of being overweight.
- ✓ How to find out if you need to lose weight.
- ✓ What you can do to lose weight.
- ✓ Practical tips on how to lose weight and maintain your ideal weight.
- ✓ Problems associated with being underweight.

The information you need to get across is:

 10 minutes

What are the health risks of being overweight?

Being overweight increases your risk of developing coronary heart disease, and other health conditions, such as diabetes, some cancers and arthritis.

Your body weight is a result of the balance between the food and drink you consume (calories) and the energy your body uses up.

Keeping to a healthy weight and body shape will help you control your blood pressure and cholesterol levels. It will also reduce your risk of developing diabetes.

How can you find out if you need to lose weight?

What does your body shape tell you?

People who carry too much weight around their middle (abdomen) have a greater risk of developing coronary heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes.

People with most of their fat around their hips could still be at risk but tend to have a lower risk of developing these diseases.

The easiest way to find out if you need to lose weight is to measure your waist with a tape measure and check your measurement with the chart.

How to measure your waist:

1. Find the top of your hip bone and the bottom of your ribs.
2. Breathe out naturally.
3. Place the tape measure mid-way between these points and wrap it around your body.
4. Make a note of this measurement. This is your waist measurement.



Checklist



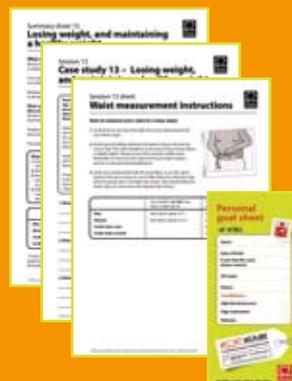
Session time:
40 minutes

You will need

- Training card 13
- Visual card 13



- Summary sheet 13 
- Case study 13 
- Waist measurement instruction sheet 
- Personal goal sheet
- Waist measure



	Your health is at risk if you have a waist size of:	Your health is at high risk if you have a waist size of:
Men	Over 94cm (about 37")	Over 102cm (about 40")
Women	Over 80cm (about 31.5")	Over 88cm (about 34.5")
South Asian men*		Over 90cm (about 35.5")
South Asian women*		Over 80cm (about 31.5")

* South Asians in the UK are more likely to have a higher proportion of body fat to muscle than the rest of the population, and they also tend to carry this fat around their middle. So South Asians have a greater risk of developing problems such as coronary heart disease.

What about Body Mass Index (BMI)?

Body mass index measurement (BMI) relates your weight to your height. BMI is usually expressed as a range such as ideal weight, overweight or obese. BMI however should not be used in isolation to determine if someone is a healthy weight. It is important to look at body shape too.

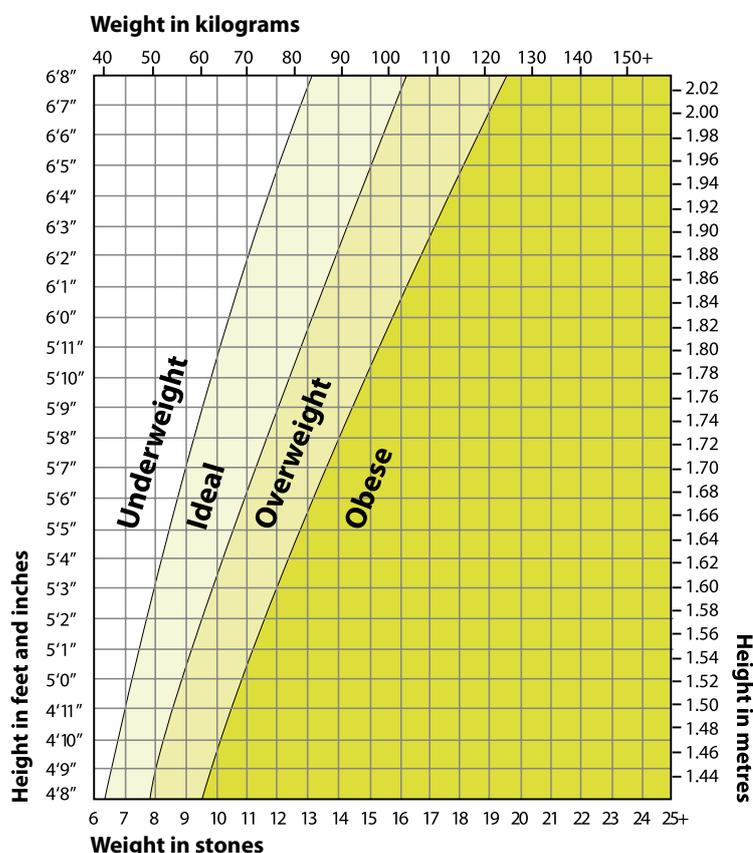
BMI and South Asians

For South Asians, BMI alone may not be a reliable measurement to help assess their coronary heart disease risk, as they are at higher risk at a lower BMI. This is because South Asians have a tendency to carry larger amounts of body fat around their middles (increasing the risk of high blood pressure and diabetes), and because body fat weighs less than muscle. So, for example, a South Asian may have the same BMI as a European, but their risk of developing coronary heart disease could be greater because their BMI is made up of more body fat than muscle³.

To find out if you are a healthy weight for your height:

Take a straight line up or down from your weight, and a line across from your height (without shoes). Put a mark where the two lines meet to find out if you are a healthy weight. This is only an approximate guide.

If you fall in the 'Overweight' or 'Obese' category on this BMI chart, your health may be at risk.



Adapted from a height/weight chart by kind permission of the Food Standards Agency

What can you do to lose weight?

If you eat a lot of fatty foods, sweet foods or sugary drinks, you are more likely to put on weight. This is because these foods are very high in calories. When you eat more calories than your body burns up, the extra calories are stored as fat, which will increase your weight. You are even more likely to put on weight if you are physically inactive.

If your weight or body shape means that your health is at risk or at high risk, it is important to make healthy lifestyle changes that will reduce or prevent any further increase in your waist size and weight. This will improve your health and reduce your risk of getting coronary heart disease.

To lose weight you need to use up more energy (calories) than your body takes in from food and drink.

You can do this by:

- eating and drinking fewer calories
- using up more calories by getting more active.

Most people find that doing both achieves the best results. You may prefer to start off with changes to what you eat (see Session 12a on page 56) and think about exercise later. It's up to you.

Physical activity

For physical activity to greatly reduce the risk of heart disease you need to aim for 30 minutes of moderate activity at least five times a week. 'Moderate activity' leaves you warm and breathing more heavily, but you should still be able to hold a conversation with someone. If this sounds impossible for you just now, remember that any increase in your physical activity is a step in the right direction and will certainly help.

If 30 minutes in one go sounds too much you could build up to it by trying activity in shorter bouts. For example, you could try to do 10 minutes at a time three times a day. And vary your activities so that you don't get bored. Try to build them into your everyday life, eg, instead of driving or taking the bus, walk for all or part of your journey.

If you need to lose weight you may have to do more than 30 minutes a day to achieve your goal. But however much activity you're doing, it's important to warm up and cool down properly after each activity to prevent injury. You should also check with your doctor that it is safe for you to do the activity you have chosen before you start. This is particularly important if you have a lot of weight to lose or you have other medical conditions.

Are there any practical tips on how to lose weight and maintain an ideal weight?

- **Eat meals regularly.** By planning your meals, eating regularly and not skipping breakfast, you'll be less likely to crave high-fat or sugary snacks.
- **Balance your meals.** Cut down on fatty and sugary foods and eat more fruit and vegetables instead. And cut down on foods and drinks that contain a lot of fat or sugar.
- **Watch your portion size.** Help to reduce your calorie intake by watching your portion sizes. Try eating smaller servings by using a smaller plate.
- **Get active.** By combining more physical activity with eating less food, you have a greater chance of losing weight. This is because you'll be taking in less energy (calories), and using up more energy at the same time.
- **Plan realistic changes.** Make sure that the changes you plan to make are realistic, and that you can keep them up in the long term.

Try not to lose weight too quickly. Losing weight slowly and steadily is healthier, and you're more likely to keep the weight off for good. People who follow a weight-loss programme that aims to lose a total of 5 to 10 kilos overall (about 10 to 20 pounds) – by losing between half a kilo and one kilo (about one to two pounds) a week – usually achieve their target weight loss²³. The good news is that research shows that losing even small amounts of weight can benefit your health.

Can being underweight cause problems?

While we hear a lot in the press about being overweight it is also important not to be underweight, especially as we get older. Being underweight can affect your ability to fight infection and to recover from illness. It can also weaken your muscles, including your heart. Aim to be within a healthy weight range for your height and talk to your GP or practice nurse if you have noticed any unexpected weight loss, for example if your clothes or rings have become looser than usual.

If you have any questions about what or how much you should be eating, or how much physical activity you should be doing, ask your GP or call the BHF Heart Helpline on **0300 330 3311**.

Pre-session preparation

Print out *Summary sheet 13, Case Study 13* and the *Waist measurement instruction sheet* 

You can order more copies of the *Personal goal sheet* on **0870 600 6566**, or print them out 

Activities

Key activity: Measure your waist (individuals)

 10 minutes

Give each participant a *Personal goal sheet*.

Invite the participants to measure their waist using the *Waist measure* and the *Waist measurement instruction sheet*. They can record their measurement on their *Personal goal sheet*. They can also write down any goals they'd like to set themselves.

Key activity: Case study – losing weight and maintaining a healthy weight (small groups/pairs)

 20 minutes

Case study 13

Name: Amrik

Age: 48

Gender: Male

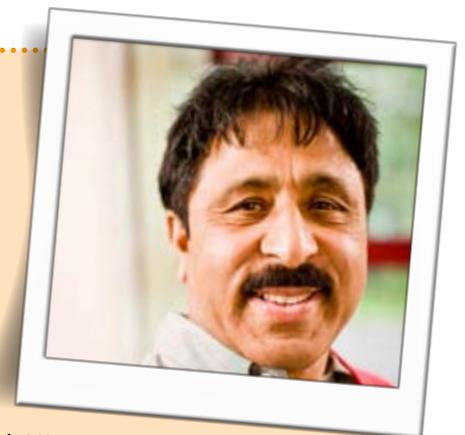
Ethnicity: South Asian

Waist measurement: 120cms (about 47 inches)

Amrik knows his waist measurement puts him in the 'health is at high risk' category for a South Asian man. He tries not to overeat and to eat the right things to manage his weight, but finds it hard, as he loves his food. His doctor told him last year that he should lose weight, as his blood pressure is higher than it should be.

Amrik tries to exercise, but this tends to be only on Saturday when he goes for a walk in the park with his family. He is a non-smoker and feels reasonably healthy, but his shift work, at a local factory, means he finds it hard to eat well and exercise as much as he would like.

If Amrik is working a day shift he often has a large breakfast to set him up for the day ahead. He has lunch in the canteen at work and often eats something filling, like meat pie, peas, chips and gravy. He's been told eating fruit is healthy and so finishes off his lunch with an apple or banana and a can of fizzy orange drink.



Hand out the case study to each small group/pair. Ask them to answer the following questions on the case study: **(10 minutes)**

1. What are Amrik's key risks and problems?

- His waist measurement puts him in the 'health is at high risk' category.
- His physical activity levels are below the recommended guidelines. (Also, to lose weight he needs to burn more calories than he's getting from his food and physical activity is a key way of achieving this.)
- Shift work and eating habits – large portions.
- Possible confusion over what counts as a portion of fruit – fizzy orange drink doesn't count as one of his recommended 5 or more fruit and vegetables a day.
- Risk of diabetes.

2. What steps can Amrik take to help him lose weight?

- Increase his amount of physical activity – Amrik needs to build up to at least 30 minutes of activity, five days a week. Depending on his interests, he could, for example, investigate weekend league football, walking clubs etc.
- Walk more – wearing a pedometer for a couple of weeks could help build up the number of steps he does a day (the Government recommends at least 10,000 a day). To lose weight Amrik would have to increase his physical activity levels to more than this, eg, by going swimming several times a week.
- Take packed lunches to work for two weeks and see if this makes a difference.
- Reward himself, eg, spend the money he saves on lunches on taking his family swimming, ice skating or to the cinema.

3. What healthier food alternatives would you suggest Amrik tries?

- Healthy packed lunches.
- Fruit juice or water instead of fizzy orange drink.
- Reducing his portion size.
- New options for breakfast – such as wholegrain cereal or toast.

Ask each group or pair to nominate a spokesperson and take it in turns to feed back. Write their suggestions on a flipchart. **(10 minutes)**

At the end of the session

Hand out *Summary sheet 13* 

Background information

Although you now have all the basic information you need to deliver Session 13, here's some more detail you might find useful.

The more overweight you are, the more likely you are to have high blood pressure or high cholesterol. You are also more likely to develop diabetes. All of these can increase your risk of getting coronary heart disease. Keeping close to a healthy weight and body shape will reduce your risk of developing these conditions.

In England, almost seven in every ten men, and six in every ten women, are either overweight or obese (very overweight)¹⁰. Worryingly, the number of people being classed as overweight or obese has been increasing rapidly in recent years.

For more information

bhf.org.uk

BHF Heart Helpline: 0300 330 3311 – for information and support on anything related to heart health.

The service is available in English only.

BHF services:

Heart Matters is a FREE BHF service offering information and support on improving your heart health.

Visit **bhf.org.uk/heartmatters**

BHF booklets:

So you want to lose weight ... for good: A guide to losing weight for men and women

(in English)

Take control of your weight (in English)

Looking after your heart (aimed at South Asians, in English and five South Asian languages)

To order these free resources call the **BHF Orderline** on **0870 600 6566**.

Other organisations:

Weightwise

Website: **www.bdaweightwise.com**