

BLACK PEOPLE ENCOURAGED TO LOSE WEIGHT AND CUT COVID-19 RISK

Public Health England (PHE) has launched a major new adult health campaign, called 'Better Health', to encourage adults to become more active and make healthier food choices to prevent weight gain.

Everyone can benefit from taking steps towards having a healthier diet and getting more exercise. Data shows that 27.7% of black men and 53.6% of black women are living with obesity, putting them at greater risk of becoming seriously ill from diseases including cancer, heart disease, diabetes – and now COVID-19.

Data highlighted [in a recent PHE report](#) 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.

The Better Health campaign, which forms part of the Government's new Obesity Strategy, will specifically target groups that have higher rates of obesity including black Africans, black Caribbeans and South Asians.

The campaign will provide access to a range of tools, information, and advice to help people start their weight-loss journey. This includes the new FREE 12-week NHS Weight Loss Plan, available both online and via a new app, which offers exercise plans and healthy food options to help users lose and maintain a healthy weight.

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

"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."

Charles Kwaku-Odoi, Chief Officer at the Caribbean and African Health Network (CAHN), says:

"Obesity is a complex and multi-factorial challenge, and one that affects 27.7% of black men and 53.6% of black women. We welcome and support the launch of Better Health, as it is a significant step in the right direction towards managing our health and wellbeing, and helping towards reducing the risks of developing many life-threatening illnesses that are prevalent in our community"

Dr Helen Lawal, says:

"The Covid-19 pandemic has placed an unprecedented level of stress on our mental and physical wellbeing. And many people have found solace by "comfort eating" and drinking more alcohol than usual, which can cause weight gain. The brand-new Better Health website, which includes the NHS 12-week weight loss plan, is a great tool to help people



reach and maintain a healthy weight and boost their energy levels. I urge everybody, especially people from the black community, to check out this website today.”

The Better Health campaign was developed with cooperation from local authorities, health charities, multi-cultural specialists, and experts in specific areas such as nutrition to ensure it is compatible with different communities. It will also be supported by a range of weight management organisations including WW, weight watchers reimagined, Slimming World and GetSlim, who will be offering exclusive discounts to coincide with the launch.

Over the next few months, Better Health will include wider support to help people live healthier lives, with advice on quitting smoking and how people can look after their mental health.

PHE is also releasing 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.

Along with black and South Asian communities, the [Insights Report into COVID-19 and excess weight](#) also highlights that being overweight is more prevalent in those aged between 55-74 years and people living in deprived areas. It also highlights that the health risk of excess weight for minority ethnic communities occur at a lower BMI than for White populations.

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