

Obstructive Sleep Apnoea and weight loss

A patient's guide

Obstructive Sleep Apnoea

(OSA) is caused by repetitive narrowing or closure of the air passage in the throat whilst sleeping. These pauses in breathing can cause oxygen levels in the blood to drop and brief awakenings from sleep. This leads to an unrefreshing night's sleep and excessive daytime sleepiness. It is more common in people that are overweight especially if the excess weight is carried around the neck.

OSA and daytime sleepiness can improve with weight loss and can even be resolved if enough weight is lost. By losing weight, general health and is also usually improved, lowering risks of heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes. Untreated OSA can increase the likelihood of becoming more obese due to the sedentary lifestyle caused by excessive daytime sleepiness.

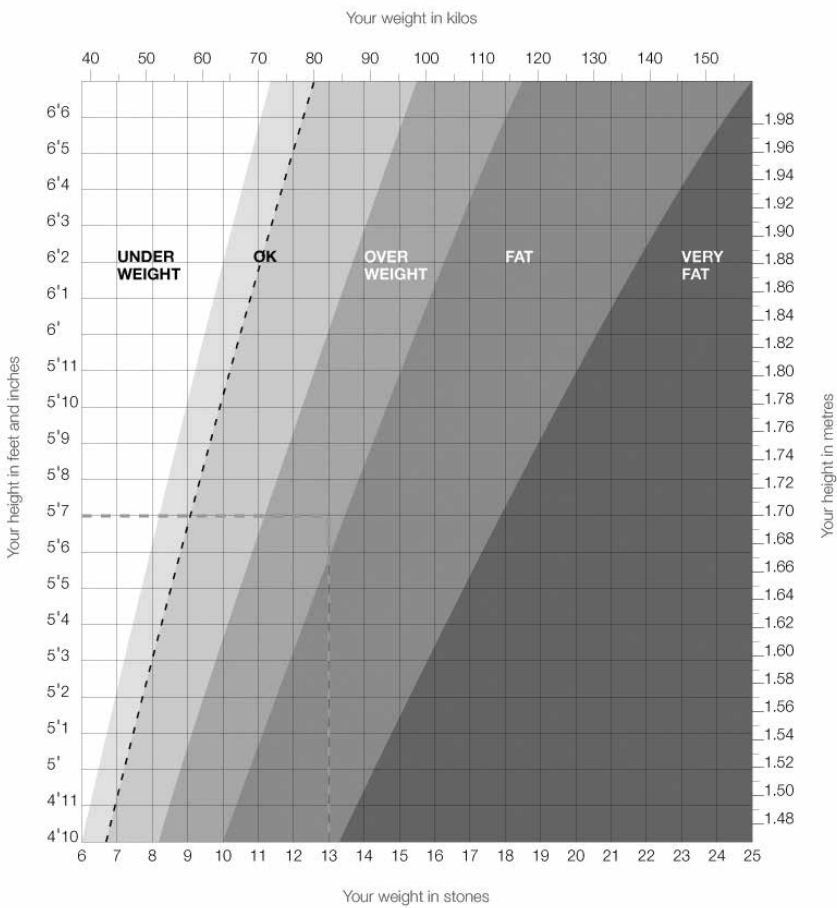
This leaflet gives advice and information on ways of losing weight.

As Obstructive Sleep Apnoea can improve with weight loss, we may be able to lower your CPAP pressure as your weight reduces. This would make your treatment more comfortable to tolerate. Patients that use higher pressure bilevel ventilators may be able to be managed with CPAP which is smaller and quieter.

If enough weight is lost, it is also possible to perform a sleep study off CPAP treatment completely. This could be performed, at your request, to reassess your need for CPAP.

Refer to the charts on pages two and three which are used as a quick tool for working out your body mass index (BMI).

Are you the right weight for your height?



BMI is worked out by dividing weight in kilograms by the square of the height in metres.

$$\text{BMI} = \text{weight in kilograms} / \text{height in metres}^2$$

What is a healthy weight?

There are a couple of ways you can check you are of a healthy weight and shape:

- 1) BMI is a way of assessing if you are the right weight for your height.
- 2) Measuring your waist circumference is another way of assessing whether you are storing too much fat around your abdomen. This type of fat distribution is often referred to as 'the apple shape' and is linked with higher risks of diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

Below are the cut off values given to indicate the risk of developing complications based on waist circumference for men and women.

	Men	Women
Low risk	Below 94cm (37 inches)	Below 81cm (31½ inches)
High risk	94-102cm (37 to 40 inches)	80-88cm (31½ to 35 inches)
Very high risk	Above 102cm (40 inches)	Above 88cm (35 inches)

BMI	Interpretation
Less than 20	Underweight
20-25	Normal range*
25-30	Overweight
30-40	Moderate-severe obesity
More than 40	Morbid obesity

See where you fit in; taking both waist circumference and BMI into consideration, can give an even better idea of the associated health risks. This can be discussed with your General Practitioner or Dietitian.

* In some sub-groups of the population such as people originating from South Asia the normal range is 18.5-25kg/m²

How can I lose weight?

Many people are aware that they are overweight and they are also aware of the risks of this to their health. It is often daunting when considering the extent of weight loss needed to get close to the healthy BMI range or to reduce the waist circumference in line with the guidelines.

When contemplating weight loss, numerous doubts and concerns may surface. Negative thoughts may appear, such as; "How can I possibly achieve these targets?", "Will I have to give up all the things I love?", "It is just all too much; I don't have enough will power".

It cannot be denied that will power will be required and changes to your eating habits and lifestyle will be necessary to achieve your goals, however small and consistent changes are all that it will take. This is dependent on a different mind set which is essential to successful weight loss.

Ask yourself the following questions to help you get on the right track:

Why do I want to lose weight?

Assess your level of motivation to lose weight, possible answers can include:

- I want to improve my OSA and therefore get a more restful night sleep and not feel so tired during the day.
- Or**
- I want to reduce my chances of developing heart disease and feel better about myself.

What is a realistic weight loss goal for me?

- Don't set yourself up for disappointment. We recommend a steady weight loss of 1-2lbs (0.5-1kg) per week.
- Significant health benefits are experienced by reducing just 10% of your body weight (for example if you lose 9.3kg or 1st 7lbs when you originally weighed 93kg or 14st 9lbs).

How will I lose weight?

It is important to understand the basic concept behind why we gain, lose or stay the same weight.

Eat more than you need



You gain weight

Eat what you need



You stay the same

Eat less than you need



You lose weight

Obviously, to lose weight you must eat less in the way of energy or calories but the key to weight loss is to do this in a sustainable way and one in which hunger does not get the better of you.

The idea of dieting should be put to one side and a long-term healthy eating approach adopted. This doesn't need to be done overnight but rather by making slow changes (for example one change a week) to incorporate these healthy eating tips:

- Eat regularly
- Always have breakfast
- Increase your fruit and vegetable intake, aim for five-a-day
- Think about reducing your portion sizes
- Eat slowly and get more acquainted with feelings of fullness and hunger
- Be aware of times when you may falter and slip into old habits. Put obstacles in the way such as a note to yourself on the biscuit tin.

The eat well plate

This highlights different types of food that make up our diet, and shows the proportions we should eat them in to have a well balanced and healthy diet for further information please contact: www.nhs.uk/livewell/goodfood/pages/eatwell-plate

Further help and support is available to help you to lose weight

Commercially available diets such as Weight Watchers have a good track record and many have found the group dynamics helpful.

www.weightwatchers.co.uk
Enquiries: 0345 345 1500

www.slimmingworld.com
Group meetings hotline: 0844 897 8000

Free 12 week NHS weight loss programme

Designed to develop healthier eating habits, get more active and get on track to start losing weight.

www.nhs.uk/livewell/weight-loss-guide

Foodswitch is a free app for android or iphones which checks foods for salt, fat, saturated fats and sugar content allowing you to make healthier choices: www.foodswitch.co.uk

Books advocating a Low GI diet are helpful in adopting good eating habits. GI stands for Glycaemic Index. This measures the speed at which foods are broken down by the body to form glucose, the body's source of energy.

High GI foods break down quickly and leave you looking for food again sooner. Low GI foods break down more slowly, leaving you feeling full for longer. It is these low GI foods that form the core of the diet. Food is listed in traffic light colour categories:

- Red light foods, which you should **AVOID**, if you want to lose weight.
- Yellow light foods, that you can eat **OCCASIONALLY**
- Green light foods, which you can eat **AS MUCH AS YOU LIKE**

Recommended books

Living the GI Diet: To Maintain Healthy, Permanent Weight Loss *by Rick Gallop.*

The New Glucose Revolution *by Jennie Brand-Miller and Anthony Leeds.*

British Heart Foundation provides useful educational materials, please go to www.bhf.org.uk/publications or call helpline: 0300 330 3311.

Your GP can refer you to your local dietetic service for support and advice and give help with exercise prescriptions if you are eligible.

Weight loss medication

Sadly, there is no 'magic drug' that will get rid of excess weight forever. However, there is a place for drug therapy in a structured and well supported weight loss plan.

Drug treatment should only be considered after dietary, exercise and behavioural approaches have been started and tried for at least three months.

To lose weight the best chance of success is a healthy diet and regular exercise. There is only a limited role for medication for weight loss. Your GP may consider prescribing medication if you do not succeed in losing weight with exercise and diet, your BMI is above 30 or you have a medical condition that would benefit from improved weight loss.

There is currently only one medicine available for GPs to prescribe for weight loss. This is a medicine called Orlistat (Xenical) and can only be considered for patients who have not reached their target weight loss or have reached a plateau on a dietary, activity and behavioural changes alone. Doctors are given guidelines on when to prescribe this medication.

Orlistat (Xenical)

Studies have shown that by using Orlistat together with a healthy diet and exercise, there is increased weight loss. Some people can lose up to 10% of their body weight in six months but in others, it is less successful.

How does it work?

Orlistat works by blocking chemicals (enzymes) in your gut that digest fat. Orlistat can block digestion of nearly a third of the fat that you eat. The usual dose is one capsule, three times a day with each meal. You do not need to take one if the meal is fat free.

Orlistat works with a weight loss diet, but not by itself. You still have to eat less as Orlistat only blocks some of the fat in your diet. If you were to eat more fat and not stick to a weight loss diet, the extra fat will easily cancel out the effect of Orlistat.

Side effects

The main side effects of Orlistat are caused by the fat which your body is passing out in your faeces.

You may have an increased urgency to go to the toilet, fatty smelly faeces and excess wind. These side effects are less likely if you follow a low fat diet and tend to settle with time.

Side effects will recur if more fat is introduced to your diet. Other side effects are rare: please read the packaging and patient information leaflet for a full list of possible side effects.

Some people who use Orlistat to help them lose weight find they put weight back on when they stop taking it. Try to anticipate this: stick to a healthy diet, exercise regularly and weigh yourself once per week.

**Keeping weight off:
Increasing activity levels and
exercise**

Increasing your activity levels whilst following a healthy diet will help you to lose weight. Everyone can benefit, whatever your size, age and physical condition.

Most people are fit enough to exercise without problems. If you have heart disease, high blood pressure, dizziness, fainting, or joint problems, you should consult your GP. Just remember, you are never too unfit to start doing something. In fact, the greatest health benefit is felt by inactive people who start to take regular moderate physical activity. Your health risks improve as soon as you start to do more.

Any increase in activity will help, but experts agree that all adults should aim to take **at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity activity for five days a week.**

Moderate intensity means working hard enough to make you breathe more heavily and raise your body temperature, but not so hard that you are unable to talk and exercise at the same time.

Getting active can simply mean doing the same things that you would normally do, but more often and in a more energetic way. Work these activities into your daily routine. Take a bit of extra time, each day, for physical activities. This will quickly build up your fitness and increase your energy levels. For those who have not been active for some time, gentle, steady progress is the key. Walking is often the best way to begin.

Taking the first steps

- If you use public transport, try to get off the bus one stop early and walk the rest of the way
- If you drive, try parking the car further away from where you want to go and walk the rest
- Walk or cycle, rather than drive to the shops
- Walk or cycle to work if possible
- Take the stairs instead of the lift
- Walk or cycle to social events
- Get a friend or family member to join you, exercise together and support each other
- Join a Gym or structured exercise programme
- Try swimming with your family and friends.

You might then start to enjoy it!

Community health improvement programme or CHIP

This is a free programme which runs in partnership with GP surgeries, aimed at improving health. To be eligible you must be 18+ and above a healthy weight (BMI) above 28. For the Cambridgeshire area please contact the CHIP team on: 01480 376300

For other regions please email: Chip1@nhs.net

Papworth Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
Papworth Everard, Cambridge, CB23 3RE

Tel: 01480 830541

Fax: 01480 831315

www.papworthhospital.nhs.uk

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Tel: 01480 364240

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Department: RSSC
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