

# M DAILY Mirror

## If we can lose 32 stone then you can get slim too

Exclusive by Katy Weitz and Judy Yorke  
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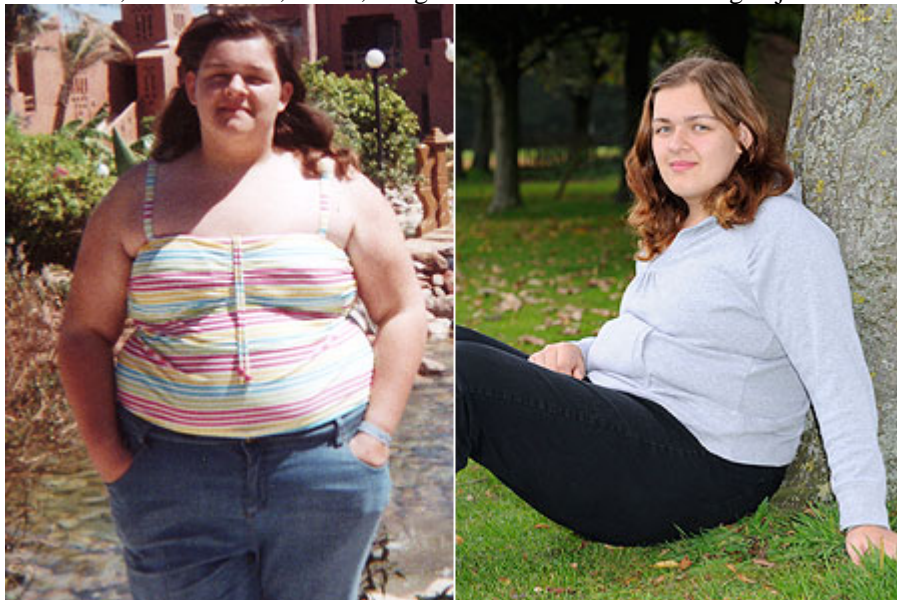
**In day two of our series focusing on Britain's obesity crisis we speak to people who have taken drastic measures to lose weight. So what is the best way to tackle the problem, and what do you do if you don't want to go to extremes?**

A staggering one in four adults is now obese and Britain's fat epidemic is showing no sign of slowing down. Even though we know it can ruin our health and destroy our lives, many of us still don't tackle our weight. And, sadly, some of us don't even see our expanding waistlines as a problem until things have gone too far. According to Dr David Haslam from the National Obesity Forum, that's partly because being overweight or obese isn't as much of a taboo as it once was.

"People don't seem to mind being overweight so much now. You see overweight people wearing revealing clothes. We're more accepting of obesity today," he says.

Socially acceptable? Maybe. But obesity is still a devastating problem and for the increasing number of extreme cases, drastic measures are often needed.

Lexi Lobb, from Preston, Lancs, weighed a mammoth 21 stone aged just 14.



Her weight had spiralled out of control after her dad died in front of her on a family holiday. She then turned to food for comfort.

Despite mum Alison's desperate attempts to convince Lexi she needed to lose weight, nothing seemed to work. So, as we revealed earlier this year, Alison sent Lexi, then aged 15 and wearing size 28 clothes, to Wellspring, a weight-loss camp for young people in America and Europe.

"I tried everything to help Lexi lose weight," says Alison, 45.

"Nothing seemed to work. She put more and more on - I was terrified she was going to die. The camp was our last hope."

Two months into the programme, Lexi lost a massive four stone. She has since shed another 16lb and is a size 18.

"I felt so nervous when I first arrived and the first week at camp was very hard," recalls Lexi.

"We had to do a long walk before breakfast every morning, which was difficult for me.

"I also found it hard getting used to the food but once I realised how much weight I was losing I started to enjoy it and the time flew. I feel like a different person."

Alison felt wracked with guilt the first week her daughter was at camp.

"It was hell for me," she says. "I was so worried about how she was getting on. In her first phone call she was so homesick she just couldn't stop crying."

But the following day Lexi had her first weigh-in and realised she had already lost nearly a stone. This spurred her on.

She also had cognitive behavioural therapy (a treatment that aims to address the way you think and act), which made her weight loss even more effective.

"Talking about losing my dad with my therapist felt like a release," Lexi says. "It made me realise when I feel sad or want to speak about it that I should just tell someone how I feel, instead of bottling it all up and turning to food."

Lexi's weight loss involved an intensive exercise and diet programme.

But for others, like 38-year-old Raymond Berry, from Westferry, East London, surgery is their last resort.



Raymond's weight ballooned to 41st and he was wearing XXXXXXXXXL clothes, ordered from the States. His waist was a bulging 70in.

"I simply loved food," he admits. "There was no deep trauma underneath it all, I was just greedy. By the time I was 25 I was putting on a stone a year.

"I tried lots of diets but I'd always lose a few stone then put it all back on.

"My weight was affecting my health. I had fluid on my legs and a bad back. It was all I could do to get myself dressed."

Raymond's addiction was taking over his life.

"I was always thinking about food, always planning my next meal," he says. "I stayed home all the time."

Finally, his doctor referred him to a gastric surgeon, who revealed the risks to his health.

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"The surgeon said I'd be lucky to see 40," recalls Raymond. "It hit home that I was killing myself and gastric surgery was going to be the only way to give myself a fighting chance at life."

But doctors were wary of giving him a complete gastric bypass, because the amount of anaesthetic needed to keep him asleep for eight hours could have killed him.

Instead, on March 25, 2008, they performed a gastric sleeve operation, which shrank Raymond's stomach to the size of a thumb.

The rest of his intestine was left intact. It was a four-hour procedure.

"I was petrified," recalls Raymond. "I told all my friends my last wishes before I went to hospital."

"But before the surgery I was put on a diet of soup and yoghurt - and that felt like more of a death sentence."

When Raymond came round, all he could consume was a sip of water.

"It felt like I'd eaten a three-course meal," he says.

Raymond lost two stone in the first week, his massive takeaways now replaced with a few sips of clear soup.

"I was quite ill after the surgery and hardly even noticed as I lost five stone in two months," he says.

"Gradually, as my stomach healed, I realised I could do more. I could take the dog for a walk and get to the end of the street without getting out of breath."

By July this year, Raymond hit his ideal weight of 14st.

"Now I can do the things I love, like going to the theatre and clubbing with mates. I've even had a couple of relationships."

Now spending a modest £20 a week on food, compared to the £300 he used to splurge, Raymond eats mainly soup, salad and yoghurt.

"I don't miss the eating now," he says. "I should have done something about my weight years before."

"But I want people to realise that surgery is not an easy option."

Dr Haslam says there are plenty of strict alternative diets available, which could be an option for some people before they are forced to go to the lengths Lexi and Raymond went to. "Morbidly obese people often need something specialised and there are two diets which are effective," he says.

"The first is a low-carb, low-fat, high-protein diet that is high in fat."

"This one is logical and especially effective for blokes who like to be told what they can and can't eat. And the second type is a very low-calorie diet."

In both cases, he says, sustaining weight loss can be a challenge.

"You need to recognise that you have made mistakes and that you won't go back to that again."

For more information go to [www.wellspringcamp.co.uk](http://www.wellspringcamp.co.uk)

Get started the easy way

Personal trainer Alan Gordon says: "It is important to start slowly as you don't want to injure yourself. People naturally assume they need to get out there immediately and start burning off calories to lose weight, but if you do that you will traumatise your knees and back." Follow his seven-point plan:

- 1) First see your GP and have your blood pressure and heart rate checked. Initially, your GP might refer you to a specialist.
- 2) If your GP says you can start exercising, get your walking gait tested. Some sports shops offer this service, which involves measuring your heel to toe movement. Before you start exercising, make sure you have the correct footwear.
- 3) Get to work on improving your flexibility as stretching muscles will make you stronger and more mobile. Buy a basic stretch book and do the stretches every other day for the first two weeks and then daily if possible.
- 4) After three or four weeks you should be feeling a lot more flexible, so now you can begin working on improving your strength. A good start will be five or six sets of squats every other day.
- 5) After a couple of weeks, start power walking. Begin with 15 minutes every other day.
- 6) Incorporate some hills into your walk once you can power walk for a decent length of time.
- 7) Finally, you can begin to introduce very gentle jogging. Start with three minutes of jogging, followed by two minutes of power walking and then alternate with three minutes of jogging again.