

# Caris

handbag-size mag for girls

## Real life

■ Aim for 5-a-day of fruit and vegetables

■ Sugar swap fizzy for sugar-free drinks

■ Swap biscuits & cake for yogurt & fruit

■ Get active: try bike rides with friends or dancing

■ Check labels: pick low sugar, fat and salt content

■ Aim for 60 mins activity & 2 hrs (max) veg-out a day

## "I was scared to go out"

A fitter Kirsti enjoys mealtime at Wellspring



**Do you eat healthily, and exercise? Many teens don't, and are putting themselves at serious risk in the future. But it's not too late to change, discovered Jo Webb**

Kirsti Moffatt used to be scared of going outside her house. "I was scared of what people thought of me," she says.

Kirsti, 16, from Scotland, felt embarrassed about her weight: her school uniform was the equivalent of a size 18-20, and she tipped the scales at 16 stone.

"I remember doing my GCSE exams feeling paranoid that people were thinking how big I was."

Last year, instead of spending her summer hols hanging out with friends, Kirsti signed up to spend six weeks at the Wellspring Weight Loss Camp, in the Lake District.

### Eating rubbish

"My favourite food used to be fried pizza with chips," explains Kirsti. A typical day could easily see her munch four bags of crisps, as well as bars of chocolate and sugary fizzy drinks — all on top of whatever meals she ate.

At Wellspring, Kirsti learnt to cook and eat healthy alternatives of her favourite foods: like pitta bread pizza with salad. She learnt how to spot yummy but healthy choices on menus, and to pick low-fat goodies when out shopping with her mum.

"If you eat rubbish it will catch up with you," says Kirsti. And she's right. Obesity poses serious health risks in adulthood — including a higher risk of strokes and heart attacks, type 2 diabetes, bowel cancer, and high blood pressure.

In the UK, one in three girls and one in four boys aged two to 19 are classed as either overweight (which means a Body Mass Index of 25-30), obese (over 30) or chronically obese (40+).

The Government is so worried that in October 2007 it set itself the task of reducing childhood obesity rates by 2010.

As part of the Government's health drive, a National Childhood Obesity Database (NCOD) now monitors the weights and heights of primary school age children. And Change4Life, a health campaign supported



Students enjoy an active programme

by the Department of Health, is working to help families eat better and get more active.

### Couch potatoes

Scoffing foods that are high in sugar, fat and salt are only half the problem. "Our lifestyles have changed so much. Not only is there so much fast food available, but portion sizes have increased," says Ian Carter, Wellspring UK's programme director.

We've also become a nation of couch potatoes. "PE in schools is disappearing, and children are happier watching TV or playing computer games instead of being active outside. Parents are also concerned about letting their kids play outside."

Wellspring UK, a scientifically-based weight-loss programme, was launched in Britain in 2006 — after successfully helping obese teens in the U.S. It offers four- to eight-week programmes, starting at £3,500 (some students get financial help).

As part of learning how to have a healthier life, Kirsti spent time with a behaviour coach, thinking through some of the reasons why she had become so overweight. "I think I comfort ate," she explains.

### Let's get physical!

Kirsti also spent several sessions a day doing physical activities:

expeditions to the woods, swimming, hockey, tennis, abseiling, rock climbing, kayaking, sailing and more.

#### What is BMI?

The BMI scale (body mass index) is a guide to healthy weight ranges for children and adults based on height and weight ranges

Students also receive a pedometer and are expected to walk at least 10,000 steps each day. By the end, many are walking 25-30,000.

"I didn't used to do sports because I was scared of what people thought of me. The most I would do was to walk to

school and back. Now I walk a lot more, and occasionally go swimming after going to the gym," says Kirsti, who lost 33lbs on camp, and a further 42lbs since.

Once camp is over an after-care programme with online access to behaviour coaches helps Wellspring students put into practise what they have learnt back home.

"This isn't a quick-fix solution," says Ian. "It's about making a positive long-term lifestyle change." Students also go home armed with new skills and great friendships, too, he adds.

That's certainly true for Kirsti. As well as now having a healthy BMI score, she still meets up with friends she made at Wellspring.

Best of all, however, is that Kirsti feels fitter and happier in her own body. "I feel much more confident. I can go outside and don't hide behind other people anymore."

[www.wellspringcamp.co.uk](http://www.wellspringcamp.co.uk)

Read Josie Mowatt's story at [www.carismag.co.uk](http://www.carismag.co.uk)

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