

Caris

handbag-size mag for girls

Obesity timebomb!

Do you eat healthily and exercise? Many teens don't, and increasing numbers are putting themselves at risk of serious health problems in the future. But it's never too late to change, discovered Jo Webb

Obesity is not about having a bit of puppy fat. Your body goes through a lot of changes during puberty, so it's important to realise that a varied healthy diet (not too much junk food) and enjoying things like sport, or dance classes, girls' football, or bike rides will see you through.

The problem comes if you're regularly guzzling on things like takeaways, hamburgers, biscuits, cakes and fizzy drinks — which are high in fat, salt and/or sugar.

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

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. Turning your back on the risks of becoming obese doesn't mean never eating a cake or a chocolate bar again. But it does mean not necessarily having one every day!

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

Last summer Josie Mowatt, 15, decided to do something about her growing weight problem. attend Wellspring UK — a unique programme for obese teenagers

I read about Wellspring UK in a magazine and thought 'Wow, this has changed people's lives'.

I'd been bullied about my weight since Year 8. Boys, in particular, would tease me a lot — they'd call me all kinds of names. In PE they would often throw balls at me. And, once, a boy followed me home and threw stones at me.

It was so bad that I hated going to school. It just wasn't nice. Mum listened when I talked to her, but for a long time I didn't want her to say anything to my teachers because I was worried it would make things worse. When that boy threw stones at me, however, she went in to see my head of house, and something was done immediately.

I was petrified about going to Wellspring. Because I was bullied I have never been good at meeting new people. But at the camp it was easy to make friends: everyone was overweight, so nobody felt different.



The activities were really enjoyable too — except the caving — and you learn so much about good food.

Some things were different to what I expected: I thought the behaviour coaches would help me to find out why I had such low self esteem, and why I comfort ate. But that didn't really happen.

The hardest part was being away from home. I felt so homesick that I left after six weeks — two weeks before the end.

But I learnt a lot about how to have a healthy life. I'm now walking everywhere, have joined a gym and enjoy swimming. And we've got a puppy now, which is mum's way of getting me walking, too.

www.wellspringcamp.co.uk
