Obesity and cancer
What this means for you and your patients

Inside:
Campaign poster to display in your practice

Together we will beat cancer
Obesity is the biggest preventable cause of cancer after smoking.

A recent survey found that only 38% of UK adults who were obese and 12% who were overweight had been given any advice about weight loss by a health professional in the last year. 

58% of GPs and general practice nurses reported always or often calculating their patients’ BMI. Some of the main barriers reported included a fear of damaging patient relationships.

However, evidence shows that patients trust and value your advice, and find it appropriate even if weight was not the original reason for their visit. There is also emerging evidence that having conversations with your patients about their weight could make a significant impact.

“While you’re here...”
It can be challenging to talk about weight with your patients, which is why PHE have put together a toolkit that provides practical advice and tools to help you.

ASK to weigh and measure your patient, as a normal part of your consultation.

“While you’re here, can I check your weight”
“Do you mind if I weigh you?”
Once you’ve weighed and measured your patient, determine their weight status.

ADVISE your patient on what support and services are available to them, based on their weight status.

“[Insert local weight management service] is available free and I can refer you now if you’re keen.”

It’s important for your practice to become familiar with the availability of local services and referral criteria, as free services aren’t available in all areas. If the patient is not eligible or the service isn’t available, you could discuss online resources such as the NHS weight loss plan or self-referral to a local weight scheme, cookery classes and exercise groups.

ASSIST once you’ve discussed options with your patient, you should then assist them by re-offering support should they change their mind.

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No single action alone will solve the overweight and obesity epidemic

Obesity is a complex issue with many causes but one of the most important influences is the obesogenic environment we live in – we’re bombarded with junk food marketing, we have far greater and easier access to cheap and energy-dense food and drinks and fewer opportunities to move in our everyday lives than ever before.

Obesogenic environments make it very hard for most people to keep a healthy weight.

That’s why, although personal choices are important, weight loss is not the sole responsibility of the individual. Governments can introduce policies that create supportive environments where healthy choices are easier for everyone.

The Childhood Obesity plan is a great start and the upcoming consultation on junk food marketing and price promotions needs to become a reality to help tackle the obesity epidemic.

OB__S__Y is a cause of cancer

Guess what is the biggest preventable cause of cancer after smoking.