



All-island Obesity News

E-bulletin of the All-island Obesity Action Forum
Volume 3, Issue 2, March/April 2011

Dear colleagues,

Welcome to the twelfth issue of All-island Obesity News. In this edition I am happy to announce that the Forum will host a workshop on June 8th 2011 entitled '[Weigh to Men's Health](#)' supported by **safefood** and the **Ulster Cancer Foundation**. This workshop will highlight that excess weight is a health issue that most men are not aware of. Presentations will discuss best practice in how to target men providing examples of relevant projects on the island of Ireland and further afield. We are delighted to have guest speakers such as Professor Alan White, Dr. Noel Richardson and Professor Hugh McKenna. I would encourage you to register for this event as soon as possible as places are limited. I look forward to seeing you there.

Martin Higgins

*Chief Executive, **safefood** and Chair, All-island Obesity Action Forum*

Minutes of Forum meetings, events and further details about the Forum can be accessed on the [Forum page of the safefood website](#).

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GENERAL NEWS

01.04.11: Over 60% of under-65s in Ireland obese or overweight, finds survey (IOI, Irish Times)

MORE THAN 60 per cent of adults aged under 65 in Ireland are either obese or overweight, according to the results of The National Adult Nutrition Survey, carried out by the Irish Universities Nutrition Alliance. The survey also found that over a 20-year period, obesity in men increased three-fold. [Read article](#) by Fiona Gartland.

April 2011: Implications from addiction research towards the understanding and treatment of obesity (Germany)

Recent research indicates similarities between obesity and addictive disorders on both the phenomenological and neurobiological level. In this review, recent findings on overlapping neurobiological and phenomenological pathways are summarized and the impact with regard to new treatment approaches for obesity is discussed. [Read abstract](#) in *Addiction Biology*.

April 2011: The provision of current and future Healthy Weight Management (HWM) services from community pharmacies: a survey of community pharmacists' attitudes, practice and future possibilities (Scotland)

The purpose of this study was to derive an accurate account of community pharmacists' activities and attitudes towards the provision of current and future Healthy Weight Management (HWM) services. The most common services offered were the supply of weight-loss medication and advice about its use. Other services commonly offered were dietary advice, physical activity advice and body mass index (BMI) calculation. The authors concluded that community pharmacies could be an ideal setting for the provision of HWM services. [Read abstract](#) in *Pharmacy Practice*.

29.03.11 Impact of sleep, screen time, depression and stress on weight change in the intensive weight loss phase of the LIFE study (US)

This paper describes the LIFE study which is a two-phase randomised clinical trial comparing two approaches to maintaining weight loss following guided weight loss. The paper focuses on Phase I which provided a non-randomised intensive 6-month behavioural weight loss intervention to 472 obese adult participants. The mean weight loss for all participants was 6.3kg. Using logistic regression, sleep time and lower stress at entry predicted success in the weight loss program. In addition, weight loss was significantly correlated with declines in stress ($p=0.048$) and depression ($p=0.035$). [Read abstract](#) in *International Journal of Obesity* online publication.

23.03.11: Assessing the options for local government to use legal approaches to combat obesity in the UK: putting theory into practice (UK)

This paper reviews the potential for regulatory action by local government to reduce obesity in light of the English government's shift on emphasis for improvement of public health from central to local government. The results provide a clear rationale for regulatory intervention that encourages a real choice of behaviour. [Read abstract](#) in *Obesity Reviews* early view.

11.03.11: Separate and combined associations of body-mass index and abdominal adiposity with cardiovascular disease: collaborative analysis of 58 prospective studies (International)

Guidelines differ about the value of assessment of adiposity measures for cardiovascular disease risk prediction when information is available for other risk factors. This study looked at the separate and combined associations of body-mass index (BMI), waist circumference, and waist-to-hip ratio with risk of first-onset cardiovascular disease. The authors found that BMI, waist circumference, and waist-to-hip ratio, whether assessed singly or in combination, did not importantly improve cardiovascular disease risk prediction in people in developed countries when additional information is available for systolic blood pressure, history of diabetes, and lipids. [Read abstract](#) in *The Lancet* published online.

10.03.11: 40% of GPs have referred people for bariatric surgery (ROI)

A total of 42 per cent of GPs have referred patients for bariatric surgery and some 52 per cent have patients who have had bariatric surgery without their referral, a new survey by

TCD's Department of Primary Care and Public Health has revealed. [Read about the study](#) in Irish Medical Times.

09.03.11: The maternity experience for women with a body mass index ≥ 30 kg/m²: a meta-synthesis (UK)

The aim of this meta-synthesis was to review the maternity experience for pregnant women with a BMI ≥ 30 kg/m². The researchers found that pregnancy is an ideal period for health professionals to intervene, as women with a BMI ≥ 30 kg/m² perceive their weight as more acceptable than when they were not pregnant, and are aware of the benefits of having a healthy lifestyle. Antenatal care should include postnatal weight management advice, as this is the period when women with a BMI ≥ 30 kg/m² want to lose weight. [Read abstract](#) in BJOG.

08.03.11: Is food insecurity related to overweight and obesity in children and adolescents? A summary of studies, 1995-2009. (US)

This paper reviews the concept of food insecurity and a summary of studies that have examined the association between food insecurity and overweight/obesity in children and adolescents. The authors conclude that all of the studies to date have shown that food insecurity and overweight co-exist – that is, even though there may not be statistically significant differences in overweight between food-insecure and food-secure children, the prevalence of overweight remains relatively high in food-insecure children. [Read abstract](#) in Obesity Reviews first published online.

March 2011: Body mass index knowledge of older adults and motivation to change (Ireland and US)

This study explored the knowledge of older adults in Ireland and the USA about their body mass index category and motivation to change. A quantitative research design was used in the study and the results revealed that fewer Irish participants knew their BMI category and in both groups measured BMI differed greatly from self-perceived BMI. [Read abstract](#) in British Journal of Community Nursing.

02.03.11: Globalization and modernization: an obesogenic combination (Canada)

Animal research has well established that a link exists between variations in corticosteroids and the proneness to excess body fat accumulation. In humans, the association between variations in corticosteroids, its stress-related environmental effects and the predisposition to obesity is more difficult to demonstrate. In this paper, the authors propose that this relationship is accentuated by globalization and modernization which favour a labour context imposing additional stress and changes in life habits promoting a positive energy balance. [Read abstract](#) in Obesity Reviews.

02.03.11: The relationship between health professionals' weight status and attitudes towards weight management: a systematic review (International)

The aim of this systematic review is to address the question of whether health professionals' weight status is associated with attitudes towards weight management. Health professionals of normal weight were more likely to be more confident in their weight management practice, perceive fewer barriers to weight management and have more negative attitudes towards obese individuals than health professionals who were overweight or obese. Being female and having relevant knowledge and clinical experience of weight management appeared to predict positive attitudes towards obesity/obese patients and high self-efficacy in weight management, respectively. [Read abstract](#) in Obesity Reviews first published online.

February 2011: The influence of physician acknowledgment of patients' weight status on patient perceptions of overweight and obesity in the United States (US)

This study evaluated whether patient reports of physician acknowledgment of overweight patients' weight status are associated with the patients' perceptions of their own weight and desire to lose weight. The authors concluded that among patients who were overweight or obese, patient reports of being told by a physician that they were overweight were associated with more realistic perceptions of the patients' own weight, desire to lose weight, and recent attempts to lose weight. [Read abstract](#) in Archives of Internal Medicine.

27.02.11: Public health campaigns and obesity: A critique (Australia)

Controlling obesity has become one of the highest priorities for public health practitioners in developed countries. In the absence of safe, effective and widely accessible high-risk approaches (e.g. drugs and surgery) attention has focussed on community-based approaches and social marketing campaigns as the most appropriate form of intervention. This paper reviews these strategies to obesity prevention. Read the [\(provisional\) abstract](#) in BMC Public Health.

February 2011: The relationship between sleep and weight in a sample of adolescents (US)

This article describes the relationship between sleep and weight in a population of adolescents, controlling for demographics, energy intake, energy expenditure, and depression. The findings indicate that particularly for middle-school boys and girls, inadequate sleep is a risk factor for early adolescent obesity. [Read abstract](#) in Obesity.

February 2011: Chefs' opinions about reducing the calorie content of menu items in restaurants (US)

This paper describes a survey which was conducted among chefs attending US culinary meetings about strategies for creating reduced-calorie foods and opportunities for introducing such items on restaurant menus. The results of the survey indicate that opportunities exist for reducing the energy content of restaurant items. [Read abstract](#) in Obesity.

February 2011: Reward mechanisms in obesity: new insights and future directions (US)

The author presents a review of our understanding of the brain circuitries that regulate hedonic aspects of feeding behaviour and also the emerging evidence suggesting that obesity and drug addiction may share common hedonic mechanisms. [Read abstract](#) in Neuron.

22.2.11: Teaching medical students about obesity: A pilot program to address an unmet need through longitudinal relationships with bariatric surgery patients (US)

Despite obesity's relevance and impact, curricula addressing obesity are underrepresented in clinical medical education. This study found that the development and assessment of a novel pilot program to teach third-year medical students about obesity and bariatric surgery has a potential impact on their attitudes and understanding of obesity and obesity surgery. [Read abstract](#) in Surgical Innovation online first publication.

February 2011: E-mail contact as an effective strategy in the maintenance of weight loss in adults (UK)

The present study aimed to assess the effects of dietetic support through e-mail on weight loss maintenance on individuals who were successful in weight loss. At 6 months, the e-mail group maintained an average weight loss of 10%, which was significantly ($P = 0.05$) greater

than the mean percentage weight loss maintained by the control group (7.3%). Read [abstract](#) in Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics.

February 2011: A qualitative study comparing commercial and health service weight loss groups, classes and clubs (UK)

The present study aimed to compare and contrast leaders' and attendees' experiences of health service and commercial weight loss groups, through in-depth interviews and group observations. Researchers concluded that health service groups can provide different group content and experiences, particularly for those with chronic diseases and for populations less likely to attend commercial groups, such as men. Read [abstract](#) in Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics.

February 2011: Prevalence of abdominal obesity in adolescents: a systematic review (International)

The objectives of this study were to (i) review extant literature on the prevalence of abdominal obesity (AO) in adolescents of both sex (10–19 years old); (ii) analyse the cut-off points used for the diagnosis of AO and (iii) compare its prevalence between developed and developing countries. The authors concluded that the AO prevalence is high among adolescents, but it is not clear what sex has a higher proportion and it is greater in adolescents from developing countries; however, there is no consensus in the literature about the criteria to be used. Read [abstract](#) in Obesity Reviews.

February 2011: Childhood body mass index and risk of asthma in adolescence: a systematic review

Asthma and obesity, both of which are considered global health issues, affect approximately 300 million individuals worldwide. The observation that asthma and obesity tend to increase in parallel may indicate a potential link between these two conditions. This paper describes a systematic review of the literature which investigated the relationship between childhood nutritional status and incidence or persistence of asthma during adolescence. Read [abstract](#) in Obesity Reviews.

February 2011: The economic burden of obesity worldwide: a systematic review of the direct costs of obesity

This systematic review aims to assess the current published literature on the direct costs associated with obesity. Based on articles published between 1990 and June 2009, obesity was estimated to account for between 0.7% and 2.8% of a country's total healthcare expenditures. In addition, obese individuals were found to have medical costs that were approximately 30% greater than their normal weight peers. Read [abstract](#) in Obesity Reviews.

19.02.11: General practitioners' and district nurses' conceptions of the encounter with obese patients in primary health care (Sweden)

This study explored general practitioners' and district nurses' conceptions of encountering patients with obesity in primary health care. While the general staff view was that obesity had to be prioritised there was also the contradictory view that obesity is not a disease and therefore not the responsibility of primary health care. Staff conceived it as important that patients were met with respect and that individual solutions were provided. Patient attitudes, such as motivation to change, evasive behaviour, too much trust in care and lack of self-confidence, were, however, conceived as major barriers to a fruitful encounter. [Read abstract](#) in BMC Family Practice.

19.02.11: Menus will include calorie counts as firms also agree to cut down on salt and fats (The Telegraph, UK)

Restaurants and work canteens will put calorie counts on menus and food manufacturers will promise to cut down on salt and artificial fats under a set of agreements to be announced today. Read [the article](#) in The Telegraph.

February 2011: National, regional, and global trends in body-mass index since 1980: systematic analysis of health examination surveys and epidemiological studies with 960 country-years and 9.1 million participants (International)

Excess bodyweight is a major public health concern. However, few worldwide comparative analyses of long-term trends of body-mass index (BMI) have been done, and none have used recent national health examination surveys. This review examined worldwide trends in population mean BMI. Researchers found that globally, mean BMI has increased since 1980 and that the trends since 1980, and mean population BMI in 2008, varied substantially between nations. Read [abstract](#) in The Lancet.

15.02.11: Lifelong doubling of mortality in men entering adult life as obese

The association between obesity in adults and excess morbidity and mortality is well established, but the impact of being obese in early adulthood on health throughout adult life needs elucidation. This study investigated the all-cause mortality until 80 years of age in men starting adult life as obese. Researchers found that the men entering adult life as obese experience a lifelong doubling of mortality, a finding that strongly supports the continued need to avoid beginning adult life as obese. Read [abstract](#) in International Journal of Obesity advance online publication.

15.02.11: Child and adolescent fast-food choice and the influence of calorie labelling: a natural experiment (US)

Little is known about how children or their parents make fast-food choices, including how they respond to mandatory calorie labelling. This article examines children's and adolescents' fast-food choice and the influence of calorie labels in low-income communities in New York City and in a comparison city (Newark, NJ). [Read abstract](#) in International Journal of Obesity advance online publication.

[Read commentary](#) on this paper (Evidence, discourse and values in obesity-oriented policy: menu labelling as a conversation starter) and other obesity related policy in International Journal of Obesity advance online publication.

15.02.11: Much of the expected increase in diabetes is attributable to expected increase in obesity (IOI)

New research published by the Institute of Public Health in Ireland found that 3 in 10 of the new diabetes cases expected in Ireland (between 2007 and 2020) are attributable to the expected increase in obesity; in Northern Ireland it could be 4 in 10. Read [further information](#) on the Obesity Hub.

08.02.11: Obesity hampers hunger controlling hormones (UK)

Scientists funded by the Medical Research Council (MRC) have found that obesity has a detrimental effect on the levels of hunger-controlling hormones in the body. They believe this could be why some dieters still feel hungry despite consuming healthy amounts of food. [Read more](#).

04.02.11: National, regional, and global trends in body-mass index since 1980: systematic analysis of health examination surveys and epidemiological studies with 960 country-years and 9.1 million participants (Global)

Between 1980 and 2008, mean BMI worldwide increased by 0.4 kg/m² per decade for men and 0.5 kg/m² per decade for women. The USA had the highest BMI of high-income countries. In 2008, an estimated 1.46 billion adults worldwide had BMI of 25 kg/m² or greater, of these 205 million men and 297 million women were obese. [Read abstract](#) in The Lancet.

03.02.11: Child obesity a ballooning problem as one-quarter start school overweight (Irish Times)

A walk down one street in Oldham, a struggling town near Manchester where one in five of 10-year-old children is officially overweight, reveals the crisis of obesity facing the population and health services. In one half-mile stretch of the Huddersfield Road, between St James's Church and the Ripponden Road, there are 19 takeaways of all kinds, from fish-and-chip shops to curry and kebab houses, with more seeking to open. [Read article](#) by Mark Hennessy.

03.02.11: Maternal employment, work schedules and children's body mass index (US)

This article examines the association between maternal work and children's BMI and considers the influence of mothers' nonstandard work schedules. Using data from school-age children (approximately 8 to 12 years) in the NICHD's Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development (*N* = 990), this study found that an increase in the total time a mother is employed is associated with an increase in her child's BMI. [Read abstract](#) in Child Development.

02.02.11: Food Standards Agency publishes latest consumer attitudes tracker survey (UK)

The Food Standards Agency has released the latest results of its tracker survey. The survey monitors public opinion and awareness of the Food Standards Agency and key food issues. [Read more](#).

01.02.11: Long-term efficacy of group-based treatment for childhood obesity compared with routinely given individual counselling (Finland)

Researchers investigated the long-term efficacy of two childhood obesity treatment programs, routine counselling and group treatment in a randomised controlled trial. There were no significant differences between the treatment arms in the changes of outcome measures from baseline to 2- or 3-years follow-up visits. [Read advance online abstract](#) in International Journal of Obesity.

01.02.11: Contributors to the obesity and hyperglycemia epidemics - A prospective study in a population-based cohort (Italy)

Researchers found that lifestyle contributors to the obesity and hyperglycemia epidemics may be regular consumption of restaurant meals, sleep restriction and higher household temperature, suggesting potential adjunctive non-pharmacological preventive strategies for the obesity and hyperglycemia epidemics. [Read advance online abstract](#) in International Journal of Obesity.

February/March 2011: Moderators of Weight-Based Stigmatization Among Youth Who Are Overweight and Non-overweight: The Role of Gender, Race, and Body Dissatisfaction (US)

Weight-based stigmatization was greater among younger children and females. Gender moderated the relationship between age and weight-based stigmatization, with significant differences in endorsement of weight bias between child and adolescent females. [Read abstract](#) in Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics.

February 2011: Social inequalities in health among adolescents in a large southern European city (Spain)

Cross-sectional data showed that boys were more likely to report very good perceived health status than girls (64.1% and 46.3%, respectively). Some of the less privileged socioeconomic position indicators were associated with the presence of overweight and obesity. [Read abstract](#) in Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health.

February 2011: Parents' perceptions and attitudes on childhood obesity: A Q-methodology study (Canada)

The purpose of this study was to investigate parents of young children for their perceptions on obesity. This work indicates that parents have varying foci on causation of obesity, and differ in focus on nutrition and physical activity. [Read abstract](#) in Journal of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners.

31.01.11: Behavioural correlates of active commuting to school in Spanish adolescents: the AFINOS Study (Spain)

The aim of this study was to examine the associations between lifestyle factors and active commuting to school in Spanish adolescents. Similar percentages of adolescent boys (57.6%) and girls (56.1%) were classified as active commuters to school. The analysis showed that only adequate sleep duration and breakfast consumption were independently associated with active commuting to school. [Read abstract](#) in Public Health Nutrition.

31.01.11: Healthy lifestyle factors associated with reduced cardio-metabolic risk (US)

Healthy lifestyle factors studied included fruit and vegetable intake, meat intake, never smoking, consuming 2–6 alcoholic drinks/week, television (TV) viewing time, and moderate to vigorous physical activity. The combination of healthy lifestyle behaviours was strongly and negatively associated with the presence of cardio-metabolic risk. [Read first view abstract](#) in British Journal of Nutrition.

31.01.11: Obesity prevention in the family day care setting: impact of the Romp & Chomp intervention on opportunities for children's physical activity and healthy eating (Australia)

This study aimed to determine if the Romp & Chomp intervention successfully created more health promoting family day care (FDC) environments. Researchers found that Romp & Chomp improved the FDC service to one that discourages sedentary behaviours and promotes opportunities for children to eat nutritious foods. [Read abstract](#) in Child: Care Health and Development.

27.01.11: Attitudes towards obesity treatment in GP training practices: a focus group study (Netherlands)

The aim of this study was to assess the attitude and other factors that influence the willingness and ability of GP trainees to provide lifestyle interventions for overweight patients. First-year trainees lacked knowledge and a positive attitude. Third-year trainees, although trained in motivational interviewing techniques, lacked specific knowledge and felt cheated when discussing eating habits. [Read abstract](#) in Family Practice.

27.01.11: Experts express doubts that food and drink industries have the motives to improve health (UK)

Health experts involved in the government's efforts to work collaboratively with the food and drinks industry as part of efforts to improve public health said the companies involved were unwilling to look at steps that would "hurt their bottom line" in business. [Read article](#) in British Medical Journal.

25.01.11: Impact of weight change, secular trends and ageing on cardiovascular risk factors: 10-year experiences from the SOS study (Sweden)

Aim: Many short-term studies indicate that 5% weight loss in the obese is enough to induce significant improvements of cardiovascular risk factors. Based on analysis of long-term data, the authors suggest that the necessary weight loss to maintain a favourable effect on risk factors in an obese population is larger than previously indicated by short-term studies. [Read advance online abstract](#) in International Journal of Obesity.

25.01.11: Adolescent obesity and maternal and paternal sensitivity and monitoring (US)

The aim of this study was to determine if adolescent obesity is associated with parenting characterized by lower sensitivity and lower monitoring of adolescent activities. Fourteen percent of the adolescents were obese. Lower sensitivity was associated with adolescent obesity in the maternal parenting model. Neither maternal nor paternal monitoring was associated with adolescent obesity. [Read early online abstract](#) in International Journal of Pediatric Obesity.

24.01.11: A parent-led family-focused treatment program for overweight children aged 5 to 9 years: The PEACH RCT (Australia)

Participants were randomized to a parenting skills plus healthy lifestyle group or a healthy lifestyle-only group. There were reductions in BMI z score and waist z score. There was a 10% reduction in z scores from baseline to 6 months that was maintained to 24 months with no additional intervention. [Read early online abstract](#) in Pediatrics.

January 2011: Adopting a psychological approach to obesity (UK)

In response to the growing challenge of obesity, South Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust and South West Essex Primary Care Trust established a joint initiative to provide a psychological service for adults who were obese and had not been able to manage their weight through traditional methods. This article describes a pilot project providing psychological support for adults with chronic or morbid obesity. Read [abstract](#) in Nursing Standard.

Recently published research in obesity journals

International Journal of Obesity

- [Volume 35 Issue 3](#) (March 2011)

Obesity: A Research Journal

- [Volume 19, Issue 4](#) (April 2011)

Obesity Reviews

- [Volume 12, Issue 4](#) (April 2011)

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NUTRITION NEWS

March 2011: Survey of salt levels in soup in catering establishments on the island of Ireland (IOI)

A new "Survey of salt levels in soup in catering establishments on the island of Ireland", funded by **safefood**, provides a snapshot of the salt content of ready to eat soups available on the island. Key findings include: Salt levels varied widely from 0.5 to 5.5g salt/serving; portion sizes varied widely from 155-609 grams; the average portion (303g) contained 60% of the recommended daily allowance of salt and there was no significant difference between the salt levels in soups labelled and marketed as "homemade" or "fresh" and those that did not make this claim. Read [the report](#) on the **safefood** website.

23.03.11: Family-based behavioural management of obesity: service evaluation of a group programme run in a community setting in the United Kingdom (UK)

This paper describes a service evaluation of a pilot of a family-based behavioural management group programme for childhood obesity which was conducted in a community setting. Results showed a significant increase in the amount of high-fibre foods and a decrease in the amount of low-fibre foods consumed and in sedentary behaviours. There were positive behavioural and psychological changes suggesting that this is a promising programme. [Read abstract](#) in European Journal of Clinical Nutrition advance online publication.

12.03.11 Assessment of a school-based intervention in eating habits and physical activity in school children: the AVall Study (Spain)

The aim of this study was to evaluate the efficacy of an intervention on food habits and physical activity in school children. The intervention consisted of the promotion of healthy eating habits and physical activity by means of the educational methodology Investigation, Vision, Action and Change (IVAC). Two years after the beginning of the study, the body mass index of the children in the control group was 0.89 kg/m² higher than that of the intervention schools. The intervention reduced by 62% the prevalence of overweight children. [Read abstract published online first](#) in Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health.

March 2011: Food and You 2010 (UK)

The Food Standards Agency has published the first wave of an extensive new survey called 'Food and You', which reveals information about people's behaviour and attitudes towards food issues such as food safety and healthy eating, and their knowledge of these issues. [Read the report](#).

08.03.11: Food Security on the island of Ireland: are we sleepwalking into a crisis? (IOI)

The Institute of Public Health has developed a discussion paper on food security on the island. This makes the case that health is and needs to be central to food and agricultural policy. Population health, food systems and agricultural production are intimately linked. A clear framework on food security is needed in both parts of the island of Ireland and this offers a key opportunity for cooperation. [Read the paper](#).

03.03.11: Irish exceptionalism? Local food environments and dietary quality (ROI)

This study explored whether distance to and density of food outlets within the local area have an impact on individual dietary quality. The findings showed a pronounced gradient in distances to nearest store and quality of diet with individuals who live closer to a larger food outlet or who live in an area with a higher density of food outlets having a significantly

better diet in terms of cardiovascular risk. [Read abstract](#) in Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health.

February 2011: Nutrients and foods consumed by New Zealand children on school days and non-school days (New Zealand)

This study describes and compares food and nutrient intakes in New Zealand (NZ) children on schooldays and non-schooldays. The results showed differences in the proportion consuming some food groups between schooldays and non-schooldays, although the majority of nutrient intakes including energy did not differ by day category. [Read abstract](#) in Public Health Nutrition.

24.02.11: Why healthy eating is bad for young people's health: Identity, belonging and food (UK)

This paper explores the emotional, social and symbolic aspects of food for young people and the roles food might play in adolescence. In addition, the paper reports the findings from a qualitative study which explored the meanings and values young people attached to food choices, particularly in school and peer contexts. [Read abstract](#) in Social Science and Medicine articles in press.

24.02.11: What helps children eat well? A qualitative exploration of resilience among disadvantaged families (Australia)

It is well known that persons of low socioeconomic position generally consume a less healthy diet. The aim of this study was to gain insight into the family and environmental factors underlying resilience to poor nutrition among children and their mothers living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Researchers found that mothers believed that exercising control over access to unhealthy food, providing education and encouragement for consumption of healthy food and enabling healthy food options aided their child to eat well. Children did not perceive food advertisements to be major influences on their eating preferences or behaviour. [Read advance access abstract](#) in Health Education Research.

23.02.11: Community Education and its effect on health outcomes (ROI)

A new research report 'Community Education: More than just a Course' commissioned by Aontas, is the first ever national study on the outcomes of community education activities funded by the Department of Education and Skills in Republic of Ireland. The research found benefits of community education on health outcomes with 41% of those surveyed stating that they started to eat more fruit and vegetables and 46% stating that they started to exercise more, as a result of their community education experience. [Read the report](#).

14.02.11: Health effects of energy drinks on children, adolescents, and young adults (US)

This study reviewed the effects, adverse consequences, and extent of energy-drink consumption among children, adolescents, and young adults. The authors concluded that energy drinks have no therapeutic benefit, and many ingredients are understudied and not regulated. The known and unknown pharmacology of agents included in such drinks, combined with reports of toxicity, raises concern for potentially serious adverse effects in association with energy-drink use. [Read abstract](#) in Pediatrics

07.02.11: Are dietary patterns in childhood associated with IQ at 8 years of age? A population-based cohort study (UK)

Little is known about the effects of overall diet in childhood and intelligence later in life. The current study, based on the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children, used data on children's diet reported by parents in food-frequency questionnaires at 3, 4, 7 and 8.5 years of age. The authors conclude that there is evidence that a poor diet associated with high fat, sugar and processed food content in early childhood may be associated with small

reductions in IQ in later childhood, while a healthy diet, associated with high intakes of nutrient rich foods described at about the time of IQ assessment may be associated with small increases in IQ. Read [online first abstract](#) in Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health.

February 2011: Diet adequacy in UK schoolchildren (UK)

There is a strong interest in the quality of children's diets as this can impact on current and future health. The aim of this paper was to review current and past literature on UK children's diets to evaluate the adequacy of nutrient intakes in comparison with recommendations, and to identify population groups that may be at particular risk of nutritional deficiencies. Although UK children's diets appear to have improved in recent years, intakes of several key nutrients remain below dietary recommendations. [Read abstract](#) in Nutrition and Food Science.

February 2011: Consumers' knowledge of healthy diets and its correlation with dietary behaviour (Switzerland)

Procedural nutrition knowledge is knowledge of how to eat a healthy diet. This type of knowledge potentially plays an important role in dietary behaviour. This study looked at the procedural nutrition knowledge of Swiss consumers using a survey to assess the prevalence of misconceptions about healthy eating. The findings indicated that misconceptions exist in the general population about healthy eating and that these misconceptions are associated with a decreased consumption of foods usually defined as healthy. [Read abstract](#) in Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics.

February 2011: Sweet and salty: nutritional content and analysis of baby and toddler foods (Canada)

This study critically examined the baby and toddler food products sold in Canada for their sugar and sodium content and assessed these in light of current recommendations. 63% of products were found to have either high levels of sodium or an excessive proportion of calories coming from sugar. [Read abstract](#) in Journal of Public Health.

18.01.11 The impact of a workplace catering initiative on dietary intakes of salt other nutrients: a pilot study (ROI)

The objective of this study was to examine the impact of a structured catering initiative on food choices in a public sector workplace setting. The results showed that reported mean intakes of total sugars, total fat, saturated fat and salt were significantly lower in the intervention workplace when adjusted for age and gender, indicating that structured catering initiatives in the workplace are a potentially important option in the promotion of healthy food options. [Read FirstView article](#) in Public Health Nutrition

07.02.11: Timing of Solid Food Introduction and Risk of Obesity in Preschool-Aged Children (US)

This study found that, among formula-fed infants or infants weaned before the age of 4 months, introduction of solid foods before the age of 4 months was associated with increased odds of obesity at age 3 years. [Read early online abstract](#) in Pediatrics.

06.02.11: Regular family meals are a body blow to childhood obesity (Australia, Medical News Today)

According to the Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA), children who regularly eat meals with their families eat more fruit, vegetables, whole grains and calcium-rich foods, and drink fewer soft drinks than other children their age. [Read more.](#)

04.02.11: Junk food companies told Government wants to avoid 'intrusive' laws (UK, Daily Telegraph)

The Health Secretary has told junk food manufacturers he wants to avoid "intrusive, restrictive and costly regulation". Andrew Lansley said to senior executives from companies including Mars and PepsiCo that ministers were not interested in "nannying" people about their food choices. [Read more](#).

04.02.11: Chefs take classes in making healthier curries (England, BBC News)

Curry chefs are being sent back to school to learn to cook healthily. One local authority is running special classes for them because they are worried that a lot of restaurants are serving dishes which are too high in salt, fats and calories. London's Tower Hamlets Council and NHS Tower Hamlets are concerned about the effect this is having on the health of local residents. [Read more](#).

February 2011: Obesity-promoting food environments and the spatial clustering of food outlets around schools (NZ)

Food environments in New Zealand within walking proximity to schools are characterized by a high density of fast-food outlets and convenience stores, particularly in more-socially deprived settings. These obesogenic environments provide ready access to obesity-promoting foods that may have a negative impact on student diet and contribute to inequalities in health. [Read abstract](#) in American Journal of Preventive Medicine.

February 2011: Preliminary Healthy Eating Outcomes of SNaX, a Pilot Community-Based Intervention for Adolescents (US)

SNaX aimed to translate school obesity-prevention policies into practice with peer advocacy of healthy eating and school cafeteria changes. In the intervention school, cafeteria attitudes among peer advocates significantly improved over time, whereas cafeteria attitudes of non-peer advocates remained stable; the improvement among peer advocates was significantly greater than the pre-post-change for non-peer advocates. [Read abstract](#) in Journal of Adolescent Health.

31.01.11: Proximity of food retailers to schools and rates of overweight ninth grade students: an ecological study in California (US)

Researchers examined the rate of overweight ninth grade students in public schools in 2007 using linear regression. The presence of a convenience store within a 10-minute walking distance of a school was associated with a higher rate of overweight students than schools without nearby convenience stores. Nearby fast food restaurants and supermarkets, however, were not associated with school rates of overweight students. [Read abstract](#) in BMC Public Health.

31.01.11: Breast-feeding and growth in children until the age of 3 years: the Generation R Study (Netherlands)

Researchers assessed whether the duration and exclusiveness of breast-feeding are associated with early postnatal growth rates and the risks of overweight and obesity in preschool children. Shorter breast-feeding duration and exclusivity during the first 6 months tended to be associated with increased growth rates for length, weight and BMI between the age of 3 and 6 months but not with the risks of overweight and obesity until the age of 3 years. [Read abstract](#) in British Journal of Nutrition.

28.01.11: Healthy food availability and the association with BMI in Baltimore, Maryland (US)

Among individuals living in predominantly white neighbourhoods, high availability of healthy foods was associated with significantly higher BMI compared with individuals living in

neighbourhoods with low availability of healthy food after adjustment for demographic variables. [Read first view abstract](#) in Public Health Nutrition.

27.01.11: Ecological momentary assessment of obesogenic eating behavior: combining person-specific and environmental predictors (US)

In this study, Ecological Momentary Assessment (EMA) via palmtop computers was used to collect real-time information about participants' environment and eating patterns to predict overeating. None of the self-report measures predicted overeating, but BMI interacted with the number of palatable foods available to predict overeating. [Read abstract](#) in Obesity (Silver Spring).

26.01.11: A systematic review of responsive feeding and child obesity in high-income countries (US)

Although current evidence suggests that nonresponsive feeding is associated with child BMI or overweight/obesity, more research is needed to understand causality, the reliability and validity between and within existing feeding measures, and to test the efficacy of responsive feeding interventions in the prevention and treatment of child overweight/obesity in high-income countries. [Read early online abstract](#) in Journal of Nutrition.

26.01.11: Exploring how calorie information and taxes on high-calorie foods influence lunch decisions (New Mexico)

This study tested the combined effects of providing calorie information and increased taxes on the total number of calories purchased for lunch. Elasticity analyses show a tax × calorie information interaction. A price increase for the high-calorie foods reduced the percentage of calories chosen for lunch but only in the absence of calorie information. [Read early online abstract](#) in American Journal of Clinical Nutrition.

26.01.11: Diet quality is independently associated with weight status in children aged 9-10 years (UK)

The current study determined if diet quality, characterized according to 3 predefined scores, was associated with weight status in a population-based sample of 9- to 10-y-old British children. Higher Diet Quality Index and Healthy Diet Indicator scores were significantly associated with improved weight status. No significant associations were observed with the Mediterranean Diet Score. [Read abstract](#) in Journal of Nutrition.

25.01.11: Effect of food prices on the prevalence of obesity among young adults (US)

This study found that food prices did not have a significant effect on the prevalence of obesity among young female adults. For young adult men, an individual random effect estimator suggested that a 10% increase in the price of fast food was associated with a 13.2% decrease in the probability of obesity, but this effect lost its economic and statistical significance once individual fixed effects were controlled for in the estimation. [Read abstract](#) in Public Health.

24.01.11: Could increased time spent in a thermal comfort zone contribute to population increases in obesity? (UK)

This review examines evidence of a causal link between thermal exposures and increases in obesity prevalence, focusing on acute and longer-term biological effects of time spent in thermal comfort compared with mild cold. Reduced exposure to seasonal cold may have a dual effect on energy expenditure, both minimizing the need for physiological thermogenesis and reducing thermogenic capacity. [Read abstract](#) in Obesity Reviews.

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PHYSICAL ACTIVITY NEWS

March 2011: The impact of dog walking on leisure-time physical activity: results from a population-based survey of Michigan adults (US)

The extent to which dog walking promotes leisure-time physical activity remains unresolved. This study describes the characteristics of people who walk their dog and assesses the impact on leisure-time physical activity. The results showed that dog walking was associated with a significant increase in walking activity and leisure-time physical activity. [Read abstract](#) in Journal of Physical Activity and Health.

11.03.11: Obesity Paradoxes (US)

This review examines the original obesity paradox phenomenon (i.e. in cardiovascular disease populations, obese patients survive better), as well as three other related paradoxes (pre-obesity, "fat but fit" theory, and "healthy" obesity). The authors conclude that low cardiorespiratory fitness and inactivity are a greater health threat than obesity, suggesting that more emphasis should be placed on increasing leisure time physical activity and cardiorespiratory fitness as the main strategy for reducing mortality risk in the broad population of overweight and obese adults. [Read abstract](#) in Journal of Sports Sciences.

10.03.11: Four-year follow up of the community intervention '10,000 steps Ghent' (Belgium)

The purpose of this study was to examine the 4-year follow-up effects of the '10,000 steps Ghent' project, which had shown increases in pedometer steps after the first year of implementation. Results indicated that the positive effects seen after 1 year were not maintained after 4 years. However, a decrease in baseline to follow-up, which was seen in the comparison community, was prevented in all Ghent participants, except those with a poor to moderate health. [Read abstract](#) in Health Education Research first published online.

10.03.11: Improvements in fitness reduce the risk of becoming overweight across puberty (Sweden)

This study aimed to identify factors in childhood that determine the development of overweight/obesity in adolescence. The results suggest that improvements in fitness from childhood to adolescence are associated with a lower risk of becoming overweight/obese in adolescence. [Read abstract published ahead-of-print](#) in Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise

February 2011: The role of physical activity programs in child body mass trajectory (US)

This paper assessed the role of existing school physical activity programs for a national cohort from first grade to fifth grade. The authors found evidence that meeting the national recommendations for physical education and recess is effective in mitigating body mass increase among children. [Read abstract](#) in Journal of Physical Activity and Health.

19.02.11: West End Walkers 65+ A randomised controlled trial of a primary care-based walking intervention for older adults: Study rationale and design (Scotland)

In Scotland, older adults are a key target group for physical activity intervention due to the large proportion who are inactive. The health benefits of an active lifestyle are well established but more research is required on the most effective interventions to increase activity in older adults. The 'West End Walkers 65+' randomised controlled trial aims to examine the feasibility of delivering a pedometer-based walking intervention to adults aged ≥65 years through a primary care setting and to determine the efficacy of this pilot. The

study rationale, protocol and recruitment process are discussed in this paper. [Read the article](#) in BMC Public Health

14.02.11: Feasibility of a portable pedal exercise machine for reducing sedentary time in the workplace (US)

This paper describes the feasibility and use of a pedal exercise machine for reducing workplace sedentary time. Eighteen full-time employees working in sedentary occupations were recruited for participation. Demographic and anthropometric data were collected at baseline and 4 weeks. Participants were provided access to a pedal exercise machine for 4 weeks at work. Findings from the study suggest that this pedal machine may be a feasible tool for reducing sedentary time while at work. [Read abstract](#) in British Journal of Sports Medicine online first content.

04.02.11: Lack of exercise - a big factor in poor health levels (ROI, Irish Examiner)

Ireland's crumbling health levels are down to a chronic lack of exercise across swathes of the population, a study has found. According to experts led by members of the School of Health and Human Performance at Dublin City University, just one-in-10 secondary school children receive the Department of Education recommended 120 minutes of physical exercise a week. [Read article](#) by Noel Baker.

01.02.11: Education advisers call for PE as Leaving Cert exam (ROI, Irish Independent)

RUGBY, rock-climbing and dance could be the next big things in the Leaving Certificate. They are among the activities that government education advisers have suggested should form part of a new secondary school subject in Physical Education (PE). It would see students notching up valuable CAO points for college entry by showing off their sport, adventure, dance or gym skills. [Read article](#) by Katherine Donnelly.

February 2011: Minutes, MET minutes and METs: unpacking socio-economic gradients in physical activity in adolescents (Australia)

Researchers found that physical activity patterns vary across socio-economic position bands in Australian adolescents, with sport being the major locus of differences. [Read abstract](#) in Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health.

February 2011: Obese adolescents are less active than their normal-weight peers, but wherein lies the difference? (Australia)

Authors suggest that more than two-thirds of the difference in energy expenditure between obese and normal-weight Australian adolescents found in this study was because of lower participation in sport. [Read abstract](#) in Journal of Adolescent Health.

February 2011: Sedentary behaviors and health outcomes among adults – A systematic review of prospective studies (US)

This review aimed to systematically review the literature as to the relationship between sedentary behaviors and health outcomes considering the methodologic quality of the studies. Based on inconsistency in findings among the studies and lack of high-quality prospective studies, insufficient evidence was concluded for body weight-related measures, CVD risk, and endometrial cancer. [Read abstract](#) in American Journal of Preventive Medicine.

26.01.11: Randomized controlled trial of the Physical Activity Leaders (PALs) program for adolescent boys from disadvantaged secondary schools (Australia)

The aim of this study was to evaluate the efficacy and feasibility of the Physical Activity Leaders (PALs) program. PALs is an obesity prevention program for low-active adolescent boys from disadvantaged schools. Significant group-by-time interaction effects were found for BMI, BMI z-score, and body fat but not for waist circumference, muscular fitness or physical activity. [Read early online abstract](#) in Preventive Medicine.

21.01.11: Welcomed investment in grassroots sports projects (NI)

Two Belfast sports clubs in receipt of funding through Sport Northern Ireland's Capital and Equipment Programme received a visit from the Sports Minister Nelson McCausland and Sport Northern Ireland. These visits provided an opportunity to see first-hand the benefits that capital equipment funding brings to local people - from the young to the elderly. [Read more](#).

January 2011: Obesity risk knowledge and physical activity in families of adolescents (US)

This article describes a descriptive, correlation study conducted with adolescents and their parents to examine the relationship between obesity risk knowledge and physical activity levels in families of adolescents. A statistically significant inverse relationship was found between parental physical activities and the activity levels of adolescents. [Read abstract](#) in Journal of Pediatric Nursing.

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RESOURCES/PUBLICATIONS

England: Statistics on obesity, physical activity and diet: England, 2011 (Published February 24th 2011)

This statistical report presents a range of information on obesity, physical activity and diet, drawn together from a variety of sources. [Read more](#).

22.02.11: Access to food in a changing climate (UK)

This report by the Oxford Institute of Ageing and the Environmental Change Institute examines the potential of future climate change for the food security of vulnerable groups in the UK. Read [the report](#) on the Oxford Institute of Ageing website.

Australia: Labelling Logic - Review of Food Labelling Law and Policy published

This review aimed to address the tensions between interests that drive policy and to seek to resolve them. The 61 recommendations contained in this Report are designed to address this ad hoc approach to food labelling and provide a clear path forward. [Download report](#).

England: New publication from the British Heart Foundation National Centre (BHFNC)

The BHFNC has published 'Top tips for engaging primary care professionals in the promotion of physical activity', which pulls together the tips that emerged from the BHFNC 10th Annual Conference for engaging primary care professionals with the physical activity agenda. [Read more](#).

England: New from the National Obesity Observatory [Obesity and Mental Health](#)

This paper provides an overview of current evidence on the relationship between obesity and mental health in the UK and highlights the co-directional associations between common mental health disorders and obesity.

[Measuring diet and physical activity in weight management interventions](#)

Practical and validated questionnaires for the assessment of physical activity and diet
[Data sources: environmental influences on physical activity and diet](#)
Sources of national and local data on aspects of the environment that influence physical activity and diet.

UK: Childhood obesity and educational attainment (EPPI-Centre)

A report describing the findings and methods of a systematic review of research which explores the relationship between obesity and educational attainment. [Read more.](#)

NI: Making Sports Facilities Accessible to All - Sport Northern Ireland and Disability Sports NI launch new sports facility access guidelines

These guidelines will help ensure that all new, extended and altered sports facilities in Northern Ireland meet the best possible levels of good practice. [Read more.](#)

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CAMPAIGNS/INITIATIVES

IOI – schools cookery competition: Over 400 entries have been received for “Takeaway My Way”, a cookery competition for post primary schools on the island of Ireland. The competition invites schoolchildren to pick their favourite takeaway dish and make it healthier. 32 finalists will be selected for the final on May 5 where they will cook their recipes and the competition is being organised by St. Angela’s College.

IOI – New Obesity awareness advertising campaign: safefood will launch a new obesity awareness campaign during May this year. The two year campaign will be aimed at adults on the island of Ireland and will feature TV/radio advertising and online support through our website and social media channels like Facebook and Twitter.

IOI: Funding available for dietitians and nutritionists

safefood is funding a limited number of applications from dietitians and nutritionists on the island of Ireland through its Nutrition Exchange Programme. This programme offers individuals the opportunity to broaden their knowledge and expertise, while the collaborative nature enhances communication and cooperation in the nutrition field. The next deadline date for applications is 15 May 2011. [Read more.](#)

NI: Activ8 Eatwell

Children in primary schools across Northern Ireland are being encouraged to get active and stay healthy with the latest Activ8 Eatwell Campaign. The programme aims to raise awareness about the importance of doing a minimum of 60 minutes physical activity every day, and ensures children will also learn how to make healthy choices about the food they eat. [Read more.](#)

IOI: Launch of the Obesity Hub

The [Obesity Hub](#) which is part of the [Health Well](#) was launched in February. This is managed by the Institute of Public Health in Ireland with the co-operation of key organisations throughout the island. It supports the development and implementation of obesity prevention and management strategies in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

ROI: Irish Sports Council support Operation Transformation

The Irish Sports Council and its network of Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs) worked in partnership with RTE’s Operation Transformation to create free events around the country to encourage the general public to get active. Each LSP organised a local walk on the 15th of

January, where a Walking Leader brought the participants on a Slí na Sláinte route. Over 3,500 people got out walking and as a result, several LSPs have organised weekly walking groups following the success of the national walks. The midlands "Give Sport a Go" day on the 5th of February attracted over 120 participants despite the blustery February weather. The event was run in conjunction with Westmeath, Offaly and Longford LSPs. Experts in a wide range of sports were on hand to guide people through the basics of a wide variety of sporting activities. Over 3,000 people got out walking and running a 5km loop around the Phoenix Park on February 19th. This hugely successful event was held in conjunction with Athletics Ireland and Dublin City Council. The Irish Sports Council would like to thank all partners involved in organizing the events. [Find out more.](#)

ROI: Be Active ASAP (After School Activity Programme)

A new programme was launched by the HSE in March called Be Active ASAP which aims to improve the physical activity patterns of school children by introducing them to a wide variety of activities in a fun and supportive environment. [Read more.](#)

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Visit the **safefood** website to view a [calendar of forthcoming events](#).

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ALL-ISLAND OBESITY ACTION FORUM MEMBERS

Full details of [members](#) can be found on the Forum page of the **safefood** website.

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