

# the machobesity report

is your masculinity stopping you from losing weight?

## Key subjects

- why are men more likely to be overweight than women?
- what's the best way for men to lose weight?
- how does losing weight benefit men?

#SlimLikeAMan



# how does being overweight affect men?

Weight worries are often associated more with women than men, but latest data shows that around one in four men have a BMI that puts them in the 'obese' category and two out of three are overweight or obese<sup>1</sup>.

Having a raised BMI increases the risk of developing a number of health conditions including heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, stroke and cancer<sup>2</sup>. And while many men might not wish to acknowledge it, weight issues can also affect mental wellbeing, impact on social lives and even cause depression<sup>2</sup>.

Men are more likely than women to carry excess fat around their stomach, which is also associated with a number of health problems and has been found to increase the risk of premature death<sup>3</sup>.

Data suggests that obesity can reduce men's life expectancy by up to 10 years<sup>4</sup> and has a big impact on quality of life in general. So managing weight is really important for men, both for improving quality of life and extending life! That's where Slimming World comes in...

## why are men gaining weight?

Like women, men's weight issues are caused by a range of social, cultural and environmental factors that lead them to consume more energy than they burn off.

The world has changed hugely in recent decades with high-fat, high-sugar foods becoming increasingly cheap, more easily available and heavily advertised. Technological advances mean that we don't need to be as physically active as we were, plus there are a whole host of leisure activities that we can do without moving, so we're less active in our free time too. Men used to have more physical jobs and often played sport. As our lives become more sedentary, being active in our normal day-to-day life is now in decline.

In addition to all of this, Slimming World's latest research, conducted with Ipsos MORI\*, suggests that men are under extra pressure, with some aspects of male culture potentially encouraging them to consume certain foods that increase the risk of weight gain and discourage them from seeking help with a weight problem.

\*Research data refers to a sample of 1,544 adults aged 16-75 whose given height and weight indicated a BMI of 25kg/m<sup>2</sup> or more during an Ipsos MORI survey of UK adults who considered themselves to be overweight. There were 855 male respondents and 689 female respondents. The survey was conducted in March/April 2016.



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# how does masculinity affect what men eat?

It appears from both wider research<sup>5,6</sup> and Slimming World's Ipsos MORI survey that men may see some less healthy food and drink choices as 'masculine'.

Slimming World's research asked 855 overweight men with a BMI of 25kg/m<sup>2</sup> or more to rate a series of foods and drinks as 'masculine' or 'feminine'. The most masculine foods and drinks were judged to be beer, meat pie, fried English breakfast, ribs, fried chicken (with the skin on), chips and deep fried fish. All of these are typically high in energy density (high in calories per gram of food), so consuming large amounts of them makes weight gain more likely.

At the other end of the scale, foods like salad, yogurt, Quorn and diet cola, which are typically lower in energy density and so are healthier choices, were all judged to be feminine by more than half of men.

table 1

## which foods and drinks are seen as most masculine/least feminine by overweight men?

Most masculine foods	masculine	feminine
pint of beer	88%	2%
meat pie	80%	2%
fried English breakfast	79%	3%
ribs	73%	4%
fried chicken with the skin on	48%	6%
chips	46%	4%
deep fried fish	44%	6%

It appears that the way a food is cooked, for example frying as opposed to grilling or steaming, can make it seem more manly too, as fried chicken and fried fish were voted much more masculine than grilled chicken or steamed fish. Whatever the reason, the key takeaway message (no pun intended) appears to be that overweight men perceive more unhealthy foods and drinks to be more masculine than healthier foods.

And it's not just what you eat that many men feel can be judged as masculine. It's also *how* much you eat and how much you *care* about whether or not it's healthy. The men in our survey felt strongly that eating large portions of food and eating everything on the plate were masculine behaviours, whereas choosing the healthiest option on the menu and looking at nutrition labels when buying food were seen as feminine.

table 2

## what behaviours are seen as most masculine by overweight men?

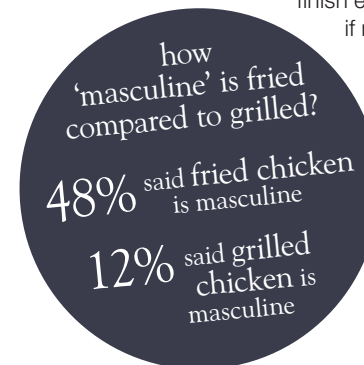
Most masculine behaviours	masculine	feminine
eating large portions of food	74%	3%
eating everything on the plate	68%	3%
playing competitive team sports	68%	5%
drinking alcoholic drinks to keep up with the others	67%	6%
drinking large amounts of alcohol in one session	64%	6%

table 3

## what behaviours are seen as most feminine by overweight men?

Most feminine behaviours	masculine	feminine
taking part in a group-based exercise class	6%	73%
attending a local slimming club	5%	70%
choosing the healthiest option on the menu	6%	67%
looking at the nutrition labels when buying food	5%	64%
following a diet plan of their own	15%	48%

Perhaps most crucially of all, men's perception of what's masculine appears to affect the choices they make in their everyday life. Of the seven foods that men said they were most likely to choose, the five that are typically least healthy (meat pie, fried breakfast, chips, beer and fried fish) were rated among the 'most masculine' (see table 1) and the two remaining healthier choices (grilled skinless chicken and baked potato) were mostly considered to be gender neutral. Overweight men were also more likely to report eating large portions and finish everything on their plate, which can cause weight issues if making unhealthy choices.

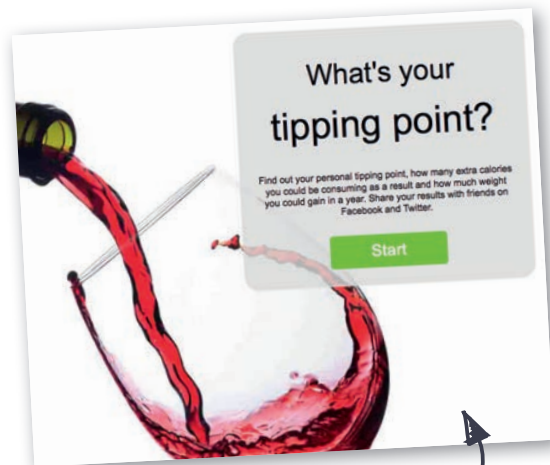


By basing meals around satisfying, low energy dense foods (that's foods that fill you up for fewer calories) it is possible for men to enjoy large portions of 'masculine' meals by making small changes to the way they are cooked. Fruit and vegetables, pasta, potatoes, rice, eggs, fish, poultry and lean meat are all satisfying and low or relatively low in energy density and so can be eaten without counting, weighing or measuring at Slimming World (see recipes on page 12).

# what is the impact of alcohol on men's weight?

Figures from the Health and Social Care Information Centre<sup>7</sup> show that men are more likely than women to consume alcohol frequently and more likely to have drunk at levels that could increase their risk of harm.

Our research shows that overweight men see it as masculine to drink a large amount of alcohol in one session and across the week as a whole, and to drink alcohol to keep up with others. A significant proportion of men (more than one in four) also admitted to binge drinking – defined as consuming at least eight units of alcohol in a single sitting – at least once a week. Previous research by Slimming World shows that this amount of alcohol can see some people pass a 'tipping point'<sup>8</sup>, which can lead to less healthy choices around food, alcohol and physical activity which, in turn, can contribute to weight gain. Take the quiz to find out your tipping point so you can be more aware of when you start to make less healthy choices after drinking alcohol.



*click to take the tipping point quiz*

Slimming World's research found that the average person passes their tipping point after around 3-4 drinks, going on to consume an extra 6,300 calories over the next 24-hours in unplanned food and drink choices.

## Brendan O'Donnell

Height: **6ft 1in**  
 Starting weight: **25st 9lbs**  
 Weight now: **14st 6lbs**  
 Weight lost: **11st 3lbs**

Brendan, 32, works for an insurance company and lives in Fridaythorpe, East Yorkshire, with his wife Sarah and daughter.



“ After leaving school I started working in an office and, over the next four years, the combination of a desk job, no exercise and nights on the town saw my weight increase by more than 5st. Then, when I met Sarah in 2005, takeaways and convenience foods led to us gaining weight together.

Things came to a head as I celebrated my 30th birthday with a holiday to Minorca. I'd been really looking forward to it, but in the heat my weight just made me uncomfortable. I was horrified by the photographs too.

I knew about Slimming World as my mum had been a member for a while when I was young. I was apprehensive about joining though. Would I be the only man? What if I didn't like the food? Would I have to give up alcohol and crisps forever?

I needn't have worried. That first week Sarah and I cooked an amazing pulled pork recipe we found online and I found that you didn't have to give up anything – not even alcohol. There was even another bloke there, which pleased me no end. A week later, I'd shed 13.5lbs and Sarah lost 5.5lbs.

As I lost weight my energy levels increased so I decided to start following Slimming World's Body Magic activity programme. I started with a daily walk and then began running, building up gradually. I run regularly now and this year completed the Virgin Money London Marathon, which was an incredible experience.

I can't believe how much my life has changed. I'm fit, healthy and really happy. We recently adopted a baby girl and it feels great to know we'll be setting her up for a healthy future.”





# how do men see the role of activity in weight loss?

This research showed strongly that overweight men see increasing physical activity as the most socially acceptable way to approach losing weight (see table 6 on page 7).

Overweight men in our survey saw competitive team sports and high-intensity activity as masculine, while group-based exercise classes were seen as feminine (see table 2 and 3 on page 3).

However, while the masculine ideal is that men should engage in competitive high-intensity activity, in reality 43% don't manage even one 30 minute session of vigorous physical activity each week. In fact, a significant proportion of men reported that they would find it difficult or impossible to achieve even more modest targets including running 100m without stopping, swimming four lengths of a 25m swimming pool, doing 10 press-ups or a single 'pull-up'. This suggests that there is a gap between what men believe they should be doing in terms of activity and what they actually feel capable of. Data included in a Government report found that while 67% of men reported meeting current physical activity targets of 30 minutes on five days each week, when their activity was actually measured over a seven day period only 6% of men reached those levels.<sup>9</sup>

table 4

## which modest physical activity targets would some men find difficult or impossible to complete?

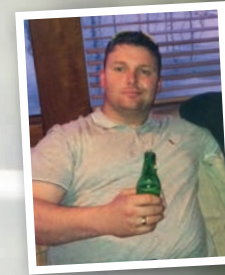
activity	proportion who would find it difficult or impossible
play football for 45 minutes	48%
do a single pull-up	37%
do 10 press ups	35%
run 100m without stopping	31%
swim four lengths of a 25m swimming pool	29%
cycle for 15 minutes	14%
tie my own shoelaces	8%
walk 100m without feeling out of breath	9%
walk up a single flight of stairs	7%

Physical activity can boost weight loss and be hugely effective for long-term weight loss maintenance<sup>10</sup>. However, evidence shows that making changes to what you eat is the most important first step when it comes to losing weight<sup>11</sup>. That's because it's easier to reduce how much energy you consume than to increase how much you burn off – especially if you're carrying extra weight. Slimming World's Body Magic physical activity programme shows how to start slow and build up gradually to meet realistic targets.

Full questions and data tables can be found at [slimmingworld.co.uk/machobesitydatatables](http://slimmingworld.co.uk/machobesitydatatables)

## Lee Hartley

Height: **5ft 11ins**  
 Starting weight: **20st**  
 Weight now: **14st 1½lbs**  
 Weight lost: **5st 12½lbs**



Lee Hartley, 38, is a workshop manager. He lives in Liverpool with his wife, Hayley and their young sons, Leonard and Flynn. Lee's son, Kian, 14, lives nearby.



“I've always loved football and, as a kid, had dreamed of playing for Liverpool. I played for a Sunday league team throughout my teens and twenties. As time went on though, my weight started creeping up thanks to loads of greasy breakfasts, sugary snacks and nights out drinking with my mates.

Eventually the manager brought in a new goalkeeper and I was dropped to the subs' bench. He told me to get in shape. I took it badly and walked away from football.

My weight was affecting me at work too. I've always had a physical job and, back then, I'd come home completely drained. I developed a back problem that kept me off work for five weeks and nearly cost me my job.

Eventually, a neighbour suggested I join Slimming World. I felt really nervous about it – particularly as I was convinced slimming clubs were for women and I'd be the only man. As it turned out, there were already a couple of men there.

I couldn't believe it when I heard how much I could eat on the plan. After a month I'd lost over a stone and by two months I was 2st lighter.

Because I'm a typically competitive bloke, Slimming World's Body Magic activity programme and awards gave me an extra incentive to get fitter. I started with a short jog around the streets, followed the programme and built up gradually. A year later I ran the Liverpool Marathon!

I started playing football again when a friend who manages a Sunday league team invited me to join them. I haven't missed a minute of play in the last two years.”



# so how do men tackle their weight issues?

*well, for a long time, they don't!*

Our research shows that, on average, overweight men take around two and a half years to realise they are overweight and another three years to talk to someone about their weight worries. It's then around another year before they do anything about it, meaning that overall it takes more than six years for men to take action to tackle their weight. In comparison, women act on their weight worries in a little over two years.

As most people gain some weight each year<sup>12,13,14</sup>, this delay could be long enough for men to go up several points on the BMI scale, so increasing their risk of heart disease, diabetes, stroke and cancer.

It appears that there could be several reasons why men take so long to talk about their weight worries. The first could be that they feel that, as men, they should deal with problems on their own and are therefore reluctant to ask for help. This view came across strongly from the men in our survey, with more than two thirds stating that they see dealing with things on your own as 'masculine'.

Secondly, it appears that men have a far smaller circle to confide in than women. While overweight women are nearly twice as likely as men to speak to friends about their weight and considerably more likely to speak to parents or a weight loss advisor, men appear to talk to a smaller range of people, mainly speaking to their partner or a health professional.

Despite taking a long time to decide to lose weight, our research shows that around half of men do worry about their weight (despite feeling that it is a 'feminine' thing to do). Nearly all respondents in our survey (95%) said that they would like to lose weight. The main reason given for this was to improve health, with feeling better about themselves another common factor.

table 5

## Who do men and women talk to about their weight?

person they talk to	Men	Women
partner	37%	20%
GP or health professional	33%	28%
parents	16%	29%
friends	12%	22%
weight loss advisor	3%	12%

Full questions and data tables can be found at [slimmingworld.co.uk/machobesitydatatables](http://slimmingworld.co.uk/machobesitydatatables)



(L-R) Stuart Eggleshaw, Paul Sharpe, Tom Mulhall and Kieran Lloyd have lost a combined 39st 6lbs with Slimming World.



# men and commercial weight management programmes

Men are more than three times more likely to see physical activity and losing weight alone as socially acceptable ways to lose weight than they are to feel that attending Slimming World – the UK’s largest commercial weight management organisation – is socially acceptable.

table 6

## which weight loss methods do men see as socially acceptable?

Increasing physical activity	<b>72%</b>
Losing weight by themselves	<b>67%</b>
Getting advice from a GP or health professional	<b>54%</b>
Taking protein shakes	<b>44%</b>
Fasting diets	<b>34%</b>
Joining Slimming World Online	<b>22%</b>
Attending a Slimming World group	<b>21%</b>



This doesn’t surprise us. With around 40,000 men attending Slimming World, 96% of our 14,000 groups now have at least one man in them and there are three men per group on average. However there is no getting away from the fact that far more women than men use our programme.

Despite the low number of men, studies funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR)<sup>15</sup> and summarised into guidance by Men’s Health Forum and Public Health England<sup>16</sup>, concluded that the components of a successful weight-loss programme for men are a combination of a healthy eating plan that reduces energy intake, support to increase physical activity and a group environment that creates a sense of camaraderie and mutual support along with individually tailored advice. Programmes should also support the use of behaviour change techniques such as goal-setting, self-monitoring and feedback. These aspects are all provided by commercial weight management organisations like Slimming World, which is recognised as being effective by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence<sup>17</sup>.

## Steve Dale

Height: **6ft 3ins**  
 Starting weight: **19st 1lbs**  
 Weight now: **13st 11½lbs**  
 Weight lost: **5st 3½lbs**

Steve 52, is a global data networking specialist for a telephone company. He lives in South Croydon, Surrey, with his wife Angela, also a Slimming World member. He has a son, Ryan, 19, a daughter, Jordan, 18, and two stepsons, Owen, 25, and Rhys, 21.

“When I was 18, I was stick thin. Then I got to 20, started going to pubs with my mates and discovered beer and kebabs. Slowly I started getting bigger.

Basically I loved my food – kebabs, greasy burgers, Chinese, you name it. My waist size went up and up until, by my mid-forties, it got to 38ins.

I’d loved classic motorcycles since I was a teenager but I’d found that I was going out on them less and less often. Because of my weight, I worried I’d come off going round corners and I hated squeezing into my XL bike jacket and trousers.

I started thinking about my health more. I’d heard about men like me suddenly dropping dead of a heart attack.

My wife Angela had a friend whose husband had lost weight with Slimming World, so that encouraged me to go.

I was very surprised when I realised just how much I could eat. Having watched my mum dieting years ago and living on salad, chicken and rye bread, I was amazed to find I could eat rice, potatoes, steak, bacon, eggs and have the odd pint down the pub – and still lose weight.

In my first week I lost 7.5lbs. Nothing felt better than jumping on the scales each week and seeing the numbers go down so much.

Life has improved a lot. It feels great to have so much energy and not get out of breath. And I love being able to zip up my new jacket and 32ins waist trousers and head out on my beloved vintage bikes every weekend – they go faster now they’re carrying a lighter load.”



# how successful can men be when following commercial weight management programmes?

While men are less likely than women to attend commercial weight management organisations, published research shows that when they do attend they are more successful than their female counterparts.

A 2015 study found that where women lost an average 4.3% of their body weight in three months at Slimming World, men lost an even more impressive 5.7%<sup>18</sup>. Health professionals agree that any weight loss above 5% can have significant health benefits while NICE has said that even a 3% loss can improve health<sup>17</sup>.

It appears that simply getting men through the doors of a commercial weight management group is the biggest challenge. Slimming World's own membership data shows that once they have, men are more likely than women to come back the following week and, over the course of 12 weeks, men attend more sessions too.



## Gary Marsden

Height: **5ft 10ins**  
Starting weight: **37st 6lbs**  
Weight now: **18st 5lbs**  
Weight lost: **19st 1lb**

Gary, 48, is a stock controller for a biscuit factory and lives in Batley, West Yorkshire, with his wife Pam, and their son, Ben, 12.

“Back in June 2012 a routine medical at work turned my life upside down. The nurse checked my blood pressure and said: “I don't know how you're still alive. With a reading that high, I'm sending you to A&E – right now.” I was put straight on medication and told to attend regular GP appointments.

I didn't start properly overeating until I left school and discovered takeaways and pubs. Rugby and cycling burned off most of the excess calories during my 20s and when I met my wife, Pam, in 1992, I was around 18st. By the time we got married eight years later I weighed 35st.

The combination of a sedentary lifestyle, plus a love of beer and fast food at weekends helped the weight pile on – while working night shifts probably didn't help.

I loved being a dad, despite there being so many things I couldn't do that slimmer fathers take for granted.

After my blood pressure scare I knew I had to make some changes. Pam had just joined a local Slimming World group and was impressed with the Food Optimising eating plan. Sitting in a room full of women, talking about weight though? No way, I said. Luckily Pam's Consultant, Lynne, had a solution and told her I could come and see her on my own after everyone had left. She was so supportive that I decided to join.

I soon understood that it didn't matter who I was sitting in a room with – we were all there to encourage and support each other to lose weight. And I couldn't believe how much I enjoyed our healthy takes on my favourite meals. Suddenly I knew that all I had to do was keep following the eating plan and going along to group – and that's what I did.

As I carried on losing weight, I began to feel more energetic and happy. My blood pressure went back to normal and I started doing some light jogging, then tried my friend's karate class. I'd always fancied it but had felt too self-conscious before.

Losing 19st has completely changed my life. There's a steep hill near my house and Ben and I run up it regularly together. It's fantastic being able to do active things with him after so many years of being on the sidelines. ”



# what do men who attend commercial weight loss organisations think about them?

In August 2015, Slimming World conducted research\* with 600 men who have engaged in our programme to find out more about what they imagined it would be like and how they found it in reality, as well as to capture changes in their health, confidence and emotional wellbeing.

The study found that four out of five men had expected Slimming World sessions to be aimed at women and around half thought that they would be 'cliquey'. However, after joining, most men (three in four) said they subsequently felt that Slimming World is 'aimed at everyone' and nearly everyone (99%) found it to be welcoming.

The NIHR<sup>15</sup> suggests that men are particularly successful on programmes that can be personalised to enable them to have some control over how they use it. The survey of Slimming World's men members found that while around half of men expected the Slimming World programme to be strict and controlling this dropped to around one in 20 once they had tried it. Once they had joined, most men found their group to be empowering and the programme to be easy to follow.

table 7

**what did men expect Slimming World to be like and how did they find it in reality?**

	<i>expectations</i>	<i>reality</i>
Welcoming	<b>66%</b>	<b>99%</b>
Successful in helping you lose weight	<b>66%</b>	<b>97%</b>
Informative	<b>74%</b>	<b>96%</b>
Easy to follow	<b>33%</b>	<b>90%</b>
Empowering	<b>42%</b>	<b>82%</b>
Aimed at everyone (including men)	<b>18%</b>	<b>76%</b>
Aimed at women	<b>82%</b>	<b>19%</b>
Cliquey	<b>50%</b>	<b>12%</b>
Complicated	<b>54%</b>	<b>8%</b>
Strict	<b>54%</b>	<b>6%</b>
Controlling	<b>44%</b>	<b>5%</b>
Impactical	<b>31%</b>	<b>4%</b>

\*This was an online survey, comprising 70 questions and housed on LifelineOnline, a free website service for Slimming World members. The survey was conducted in July/August 2015.



## Commercial weight management programmes online

While the research suggests that men find Slimming World groups to be much less female-focused and far more welcoming than they expected, men who don't feel comfortable attending a group can access the programme online and follow the same eating plan and physical activity programme. Men lose an average 3.5% body weight in 13 weeks using Slimming World Online, compared to women who lose 2.9%.

# can commercial weight management programmes improve men's health, body image and sex life?

The men said they had seen big improvements in health, wellbeing and confidence since joining a group. While most respondents described their health as poor or fair before joining Slimming World, the majority now described it as good, very good or excellent.

The respondents had also become much more mobile as a result of losing weight. Around two-thirds said they were previously limited in the types of activities they could do, with a significant proportion saying they had been limited when doing moderate activities such as pushing a vacuum cleaner or walking 100 yards and most saying they had struggled with climbing several flights of stairs. Since joining Slimming World and losing weight, more than three-quarters said they were not limited in the types of activities they could do.

table 8

## how does men's health change after joining Slimming World?

	before	now
Excellent	0%	12%
Very Good	4%	34%
Good	19%	35%
Fair	41%	15%
Poor	37%	4%

Losing weight through a commercial weight management organisation had a positive effect on the emotional wellbeing of respondents. The proportion of men who felt down hearted and low most of the time fell dramatically from almost one in three to around one in 30 and there was also a big fall in the proportion of men who said their physical or emotional concerns got in the way of their social activities.



**Mark Quashie, from Hemel Hempstead, lost 3st 7lbs with Slimming World**



Studies have shown that body image concerns are increasingly common among men and these worries are often linked to weight<sup>19</sup>. Joining Slimming World was found to increase body confidence among the men in this survey, with around three quarters saying they now feel comfortable with their physique, compared to only around one in five reporting this before they engaged in the programme.

An NIHR funded review<sup>20</sup> reported that male engagement in weight management programmes can reduce erectile dysfunction. Similarly, the proportion of men who said they are always physically able to have sex increased significantly after attending a Slimming World group.

Losing weight also appeared to have a positive impact on men's confidence in the bedroom. Some seven out of 10 men said they now feel confident about sex most of the time, up from four out of 10 before losing weight. And while one in four men said that they were happy with the way their partner responded to their appearance before they lost weight, this more than doubled to six out of 10 after accessing the weight loss support.

The men in the survey reported that they now have sex more frequently. While the majority of men reported having sex once a month or less before joining Slimming World, a majority said that they now have sex once a week or more since losing weight.

table 9

## how do men's sex lives improve after joining Slimming World?

	before	now
I am physically able to have sex	66%	84%
I feel confident to have sex	38%	71%
I like the way that my partner responds to my appearance	24%	61%
I like the way that potential partners respond to my appearance	10%	45%
I am confident with my appearance	55%	80%
My weight does not affect my sex life	69%	91%



## Uways Pervez

Height: **6ft 1½ins**  
 Starting weight: **20st 1½lbs**  
 Weight now: **12st**  
 Weight lost: **8st 1½lbs**



Uways Pervez, 22, is a newly qualified nurse and lives in Banbury, Oxfordshire, with his parents and three sisters.

“I'd been large most of my life and was always bigger than my friends, but when I started studying nursing at university in 2012 I lived off takeaways, so more weight soon piled on.

Before I joined Slimming World I'd get tired all the time and had no energy. I'm a nurse which is a physical job and spending 14 hours on my feet was exhausting, especially on top of studying. It was a comment from my friend that prompted me to do something about my weight. We were talking in a seminar about a particular condition that affects people who are underweight and my friend joked that I didn't have to worry because I was really fat.

I was determined to set a better example as a health professional, so I visited my GP for advice, who referred me to Slimming World for 12 weeks.

I thought Slimming World was just for women, so as a young guy I was really nervous about going to group. I soon realised it didn't matter, everyone was really friendly and started chatting to me, and my Consultant Jenny put me at ease straightaway.

I was surprised at how easy I found it to fit healthy eating into my busy routine and how affordable eating the Slimming World way is too – especially on a student's wage.

Now I've lost weight, my friends all say that I have much more confidence and I don't hide away in baggy clothes any more. I have so much more energy at work too, moving patients is easier and I don't feel self-conscious about raising the issue of weight with patients now either. I think that understanding how it feels to be unhappy and ashamed of your size helps me to approach the subject in a more sensitive manner – plus I can tell patients all about Slimming World, too. ”

## conclusion

Our research suggests that, culturally, men see it as masculine to make unhealthy lifestyle choices that can have a negative effect on their weight and to avoid seeking support to help them manage their weight. In addition, the findings show it often takes men far too long to acknowledge and talk about their weight worries.

However, commercial weight management organisations that offer support as well as a healthy eating plan and activity guidance welcome men and have been proven to be effective in helping them to lose weight.

Through programmes such as Slimming World, men can discover recipe ideas that enable them to cook foods that are seen as masculine – like pies, cooked breakfasts and chips – in a healthier way (see page 12 for some simple recipes) and get support to help them identify obstacles to healthy lifestyle choices and make plans to overcome them. By basing their choices on foods that are satisfying and low in energy density – the cornerstones of Slimming World's Food Optimising eating plan – men can consume larger portions of food and eat to satisfy their appetite, and still enjoy a beer or a packet of crisps, for example, in moderation as part of a balanced eating plan to support weight loss.

While there appears to be a gulf between men's expectations of how physically active they should be and what they are capable of, getting support can help men to increase activity gradually and do the things they enjoy doing. Slimming World's member research shows that 65% of members have become more active after becoming aware of our Body Magic programme<sup>21</sup>. Many become very active, even running marathons (see Brendan's and Lee's stories on pages 4 and 5). While physical activity alone has less of an impact on weight loss than making changes to eating habits, it has been found to increase the chances of long-term weight loss maintenance.

It is clear from this research that losing weight has huge benefits for men in terms of their health, wellbeing, body image, confidence and sex life.

By getting support to make changes men can gain a sense of control and empowerment that benefits them in many aspects of their life.

You can find more information about Slimming World at [www.slimmingworld.co.uk](http://www.slimmingworld.co.uk)



# some satisfying and healthy meals to get your teeth into



**Chicken tikka masala**  
**Serves 4**  
**Free**  
**Ready in 45 minutes, plus marinating**

Juice of 1 lime  
150g fat free natural yogurt  
5 tbsp tikka curry powder  
4 skinless chicken breasts, cut into bite-sized pieces  
Low calorie cooking spray  
1 onion, grated  
4 garlic cloves, crushed  
2cm piece of root ginger, peeled and grated  
1 red chilli, deseeded and chopped  
1 tsp ground cinnamon  
1 tsp ground cumin  
6 tbsp tomato purée  
5 tbsp fat free natural fromage frais  
Small handful of roughly chopped fresh coriander, to garnish

Mix together the lime juice, yogurt and 3 tablespoons of the tikka curry powder. Season, then add the chicken and toss to coat. Marinate in the fridge for 4 hours. When you're ready to cook, preheat the grill to medium. Spray a large non-stick frying pan with low calorie cooking spray and place over a medium heat. Add the onion, garlic, ginger, chilli, cinnamon, cumin and remaining tikka curry powder and fry for 2-3 minutes. Stir in the tomato purée and 250ml of water. Bring to the boil, then simmer for 12-15 minutes, stirring often. Meanwhile, grill the chicken pieces for 12-15 minutes or until cooked through, turning occasionally. Remove the chicken and stir into the sauce. Take the sauce off the heat, stir in the fromage frais and scatter over the coriander.



**Fish and chips**  
**Serves 4**  
**2 Syns per serving**  
**Ready in 45 minutes**

3 medium slices day-old white bread from a small 400g loaf, torn into pieces  
800g floury potatoes, such as Desiree or King Edward, peeled and cut into thick chips  
Low calorie cooking spray  
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper  
4 x 170g skinless and boneless cod fillets  
2 eggs  
2 tbsp beer  
Small handful of fresh parsley, finely chopped, to garnish

Preheat your oven to 220°C/Fan 200°C/Gas 7. Line two baking trays with baking paper. Whizz the bread in a food processor until crumbed, then transfer to a plate. Boil the chips in lightly salted boiling water for 4-5 minutes, then drain well, return to the pan and cover. Lightly shake to roughen up the chips' edges, then arrange on one of the baking trays in a single layer. Spray with low calorie cooking spray, season and bake for 15-20 minutes, or until golden. Meanwhile, season the cod. In a shallow bowl, beat together the eggs and beer. Dip the fish in the egg mixture, then coat with the breadcrumbs. Transfer to the second baking sheet. Repeat with the remaining fillets and bake for 15-20 minutes, or until cooked through and lightly browned. Sprinkle the parsley over the fish and serve with the chips, plenty of mushy peas, plus lemon wedges for squeezing over.



**Tex-Mex veggie chili**  
**Serves 4**  
**Free**  
**Ready in 40 minutes**

3 large red chillies  
Low calorie cooking spray  
1 large onion, roughly chopped  
2 large garlic cloves  
1 red pepper, deseeded and cut into chunks  
1 orange pepper, deseeded and cut into chunks  
2 tsp ground cumin  
1 tsp ground cinnamon  
1 tsp paprika  
500g Quorn mince  
400g can chopped tomatoes with chilli and garlic  
500g passata with herbs  
400g can kidney beans, drained  
6 tbsp fat free natural fromage frais

Deseed and finely chop two red chillies. Spray a large, deep saucepan with low calorie cooking spray and add the chopped chillies, onion, garlic and peppers. Fry over a medium heat for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Sprinkle over the cumin, cinnamon and paprika and cook for 1-2 minutes, stirring well. Stir in the Quorn mince, tomatoes, passata, kidney beans and 300ml of cold water. Bring to the boil, cover and simmer for 20 minutes. Meanwhile, use long-handled tongs to cook the remaining chilli directly over an open flame, carefully turning until charred. Place the chilli into a plastic food bag, seal and leave to steam for 10 minutes. Remove the chilli's blackened skin and seeds. Using the blade of a knife, mash the chilli flesh and stir into the fromage frais.



**Steak and kidney pies**  
**Serves 4**  
**4½ Syns per serving**  
**Ready in 45 minutes**

Low calorie cooking spray  
300g beef frying steaks, all visible fat removed, cut into bitesize pieces.  
100g ready prepared, lamb's kidneys, white cores removed, roughly chopped  
1 carrot, peeled and finely cubed  
1 celery stick, finely cubed  
200g baby button mushrooms  
1 onion, finely chopped  
2 tbsp Worcestershire sauce  
1 tsp garlic salt  
1 tsp finely chopped fresh thyme  
300ml beef stock  
1 level tsp gravy granules  
112g ready-to-roll light puff pastry  
2 eggs, lightly beaten

Preheat your oven to 220°C/200°C Fan/gas 7. Place a large pan sprayed with low calorie cooking spray over a high heat. Add the steak, kidneys, carrot, celery, mushrooms, onion, Worcestershire sauce, garlic salt, thyme, beef stock and gravy granules. Bring to the boil, then cook over a high heat, stirring occasionally for 6-8 minutes or until thickened. Divide the mixture between 4 individual pie dishes. roll out the pastry and cut out 4 lids. Brush the rim of each dish with the egg, add the pastry lids and seal the edges with a fork. Make a hole in the centre of each pie, then brush the lid with more egg. Bake for 15-20 minutes or until the pastry has risen.



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