

# Obesity is a chronic disease.

-  Obesity is associated with over 195 complications including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and osteoarthritic pain<sup>1</sup>.
-  Overweight and obesity is a highly stigmatised condition and can negatively affect how care is delivered and experienced<sup>1</sup>.
-  The prevalence of obesity amongst adults in Ireland is approximately 26%, ranking it amongst the top 5 European countries for highest prevalence of obesity<sup>2</sup>.
-  The Growing Up in Ireland study observed that 27% of adolescents aged 17 – 18 years are living with overweight or obesity<sup>3</sup>.
-  A higher prevalence of obesity is found among socially disadvantaged groups in Ireland<sup>1</sup>.
-  Ireland is on track to becoming the country in Europe with the highest prevalence of obesity (45%) according to the measure of Body Mass Index (BMI)<sup>4</sup>.

Obesity is a disease centred in the brain and caused by the interaction of biological, genetic, social, psychological and environmental factors<sup>5</sup>.

Factors include:

## Social:

Health, social and economic inequalities and life events<sup>7</sup>



## Psychological:

Stress and psychological distress impact appetite, with depression linked to risk of Obesity<sup>8,9</sup>



## Environmental:

Easy access to unhealthy fast food, limited access to recreational facilities<sup>10</sup>



## Genetic:

40-70% of our weight is dependent on our genetic make-up. Race, ethnicity and family history influence the risk of developing obesity<sup>11</sup>



## Biological:

The brain influences energy balance and appetite in response to the environment and the body's energy needs, with powerful hormonal and metabolic changes activated to prevent starvation<sup>12</sup>



**Many factors are outside an individual's control<sup>6</sup>.**

**Weight loss for health gain.** A weight loss of 5% can improve overall health and weight-related complications<sup>13</sup>. There are several effective treatment options for weight management.

-  **Bariatric surgery.** Intended to manage excess weight and/or associated with weight related complications<sup>14</sup>.
-  **Lifestyle therapy.** Diet, nutrition counselling & increased physical activity<sup>13</sup>.
-  **Pharmacotherapy.** Targets pathways in the body involved in weight regulation<sup>15</sup>.

**It's not about willpower.** Why sustained weight loss is **difficult?**

**Weight loss triggers metabolic adaptation** - the homeostatic system in the body will try to gain it back by making one feel more hungry and less full, ultimately leading to weight regain<sup>16</sup>.

# Stigma: The weight of the problem.

Alongside the biological factors that predispose people with obesity to physical health impairment, there is robust evidence for the negative implications of **weight bias** and **stigma**<sup>17</sup>. This is manifested in increased risk of depression and anxiety, reduced health-related quality of life and increased weight gain. A recent Irish survey of people living with obesity found:

77% feel stigmatised as a direct result of their weight<sup>18</sup>.

74% of people believe their weight negatively influences the way people interact with them<sup>18</sup>.

48% have experienced public name calling as a result of their weight<sup>18</sup>.

## Obesity and COVID-19



According to WHO, people living with obesity are considered high risk for developing severe illness from COVID-19 compared to individuals with healthy weight ranges<sup>19</sup>.

Obesity increases the risk of hospitalisation due to COVID-19<sup>19</sup>.

Obesity is a **prevalent risk factor** for hospitalisation among people <65 years with COVID-19<sup>19</sup>.

## €4.6 billion.



The lifetime **cost** of childhood obesity, which includes health care and societal costs in Ireland<sup>1</sup>.

**€1.7 million:** Direct healthcare costs associated with childhood obesity<sup>1</sup>.

**€1.13 billion:** Annual estimated cost of adult obesity of which a third are direct healthcare costs such as hospital care and medication<sup>1</sup>.

## Obesity is underdiagnosed and undertreated.



### ACTION IO Study:

The Action IO Study (**A**wareness, **C**are, and **T**reatment **I**n **O**besity **M**anagement – an **I**nternational **O**bservation) investigated barriers to obesity care and treatment from the perspective of people living with the disease and health care professionals. The aims of the study was to identify international behaviours and barriers to obesity care in people living with obesity (PwO) and health care professionals (HCPs)<sup>20</sup>.

68% of PwO would like their HCP to initiate a conversation about their weight<sup>20</sup>.

There was an average of **6 years** between the time PwO began struggling with excess weight and when they first discussed their weight with an HCP<sup>20</sup>.

46% of PwO were aware of the impact of excess weight on their health and **48%** were activated to lose weight<sup>20</sup>.

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