

Can we have our cake and eat it — then go to the gym?

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There is compelling evidence that both obesity and a sedentary lifestyle are strong independent risk factors for premature death — but is it healthier to be obese and physically active or a healthy weight and sedentary? In other words can we have our cake and eat it if we then hit the gym?

A public debate is being staged at The University of Nottingham on behalf of the Nutrition Society to discuss whether we can be 'fit and fat'.

Speakers from the fields of metabolism, obesity, exercise and nutrition will open the event these talks will be followed by a public debate. All members of the public are welcome to join in.

The theme of the debate centres on the 'fat and fit' hypothesis which states that:

- Regular physical activity reduces many of the health risks associated with being overweight or obese.
- Physical activity appears not only to reduce the health risks of being overweight and obese but active obese individuals actually have lower morbidity and mortality than normal weight individuals who are sedentary.
- Inactivity and low cardio-respiratory fitness are as important as overweight and obesity as mortality predictors.

Questions from the floor will be taken by Ian MacDonald, Professor of

Metabolic Physiology in the Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences at The University of Nottingham. Also speaking will be Nicky Gilbert, a freelance sports nutritionist who has worked with world class athletes and Dr David Stensel an expert in exercise and metabolism in the School of Sport and Exercise Sciences at Loughborough University.

Professor MacDonald said: “It is clear that being overweight and being sedentary are associated with an increased risk of ill health. It is not clear whether one of these is more unhealthy than the other, or just how many overweight people really are physically fit and whether this protects them against the problems caused by overweight”.

The public engagement event is part of the Nutrition Society Summer meeting which is being held at The University of Nottingham between 30 June and 3rd July 2008. The debate has been organised by Dr Alison Mostyn, a lecturer in Biological Sciences in the School of Nursing. Pupils from local secondary schools and members of the general public are invited to attend.

Dr Moystn said: “It's great that the University of Nottingham and the Nutrition Society can open this debate up to the public. Obesity is in the news almost daily at the moment; this event will give people from the East Midlands the opportunity to hear some expert speakers discuss exercise and obesity — a topic which affects many of us”.

Source: The University of Nottingham

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