

More than 57,000 children become overweight or obese during primary school

September 1 2016



Credit: Cancer Research UK

Every year, 57,100 children who started primary school in England at a healthy weight end up obese or overweight by the time they leave, according to new statistics published today (Thursday) by Cancer Research UK.

This worrying statistic adds to the fact that one in five children are

already overweight or obese when they start [primary school](#). And by the time they leave, that figure rises to one in three.

To highlight the staggeringly high level of children's [obesity](#) and epidemic of rising ill-health, Cancer Research UK has transformed a shop front into an XL school uniform shop to show the new norm of larger school uniforms.

The Government has reneged on its commitment to publish a robust strategy to tackle the crisis of children's obesity. Encouraging exercise and a sugar tax alone won't curb the rise of ill-health which could cost the NHS billions. Commitments to protect children from junk food marketing and mandatory targets to reduce the amount of fat, sugar and salt in food are also vital.

We know that [obese children](#) are around five times more likely to grow into [obese adults](#), and carrying too much weight increases the risk of [cancer](#) as well as other diseases.

Sarah-Louise Bridgewater from Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, mother of two, said: "As a mum, my number one priority is to make sure my children are healthy. Seeing these outsize school uniforms has really worried me.

"As much as I want to, I just can't watch my children 24 hours a day and it's hard to stop them spending their pocket money on junk food. We've got to pull together to stop kids stuffing themselves with fatty sugary food that's going to make them ill later in life."

Being overweight or obese is the single biggest cause of preventable cancer in the UK after smoking and contributes to 18,100 cases of cancer every year. It is linked to 10 types of cancer including bowel, breast, and pancreatic.

Alison Cox, Cancer Research UK's director of prevention, said: "The Government has failed children. More than 57,000 children will become overweight or obese during primary school each year in England, and the Government had a chance to prevent this. The childhood obesity plan is simply not up to the task of tackling children's obesity. Instead, the next generation faces a future of ill health, shortened lives, and an overstretched NHS.

"It will take more than encouraging exercise and a sugar tax to tackle the obesity epidemic. The Government has already recognised the influence of junk food marketing on children's health by banning [junk food](#) advertising during children's programmes - it's time to close the loop hole during family viewing time.

"Young waistlines have been expanding steadily over the last two decades. With so many overweight and obese [children](#) in England, we are seeing a greater need for larger school uniforms. And it's a shame the Government has missed an opportunity to save lives."

More information: Visit cruk.org/ChildhoodObesityStrategy

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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