

Obesity in Merton

THE SCALE OF THE CHALLENGE

Current estimates suggest around **59.5% of Merton's adults*** are overweight or obese**, equating to approximately 97,700 people. This proportion is similar to the London average, and lower than England (1).

97,700
adults overweight
or obese.



6.7%

adults registered obese
by their GP.

11,660 Merton adults were recorded as obese by their GP in 2014/15, representing 6.7% of the borough's GP-registered population. This level was similar to London and lower than the England average (3).

Overweight and obesity is unequally distributed in society.



In England, **men are more commonly overweight** than women, while the level of obesity is equal in both sexes.

Prevalence of overweight and obesity varies with age. Obesity levels are highest in those aged **55 to 64** years.



There is also a **link between obesity and household income**, particularly among women. Women in the second lowest income quintile have the highest level of obesity, around double that of women with the highest household incomes (2).

A similar pattern of inequality is likely to exist in Merton.

*UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED, 'ADULTS' REFERS TO PEOPLE AGED 16 AND OVER.

**ADULTS ARE CLASSIFIED AS OVERWEIGHT IF THEIR BODY MASS INDEX (BMI) IS GREATER THAN OR EQUAL TO 25 KG/M². ADULTS WITH A BMI OF 30 KG/M² OR ABOVE ARE CLASSIFIED OBESE.

Obesity in Merton

EATING A HEALTHY DIET IS KEY TO PREVENTING OBESITY



In 2015, **55.1% of Merton adults surveyed reported eating the recommended 'five-a-day'** on a usual day (4).

This suggested around

73,700

adults' diets did not contain the recommended quantity of fruit and vegetables.



A high density of fast food outlets in our environment may contribute to a rise in obesity.

Merton has approximately

167

 fast food outlets.

This equates to roughly 82 outlets per 100,000 residents.

Compared to the other London boroughs, Merton ranks 11 out of 32 for fast food outlet density (where 1 has the lowest density and 32 the highest). Richmond and Kingston boroughs have the lowest densities, with around 64 outlets per 100,000 population (5).

Obesity in Merton

BEING PHYSICALLY ACTIVE IS CRITICAL TO MAINTAINING A HEALTHY WEIGHT

Current guidelines recommend adults do 2.5 hours of moderate activity per week, in bouts of ten minutes or more. 2015 estimates suggested around **58.7% of Merton adults, some 97,400 residents, were achieving this recommended amount**, a similar proportion to London and England.



Over one in four, however, were estimated to be physically inactive, suggesting around **46,000 Merton adults were doing less than half an hour of at least moderate intensity exercise per week** (4).



In a 2014/15 survey of 15 year-olds, more than



This level has been linked to risk of overweight and obesity, irrespective of physical activity levels.

The same survey estimated **11.8% were achieving the recommended amount of physical activity** for young people, defined as at least one hour per day of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity. These estimates are similar to those for London and England (6).

Obesity in Merton

DAILY WALKING OR CYCLING CAN HELP ACHIEVE ACTIVITY RECOMMENDATIONS



Introducing walking and cycling into a daily routine can help people achieve their recommended physical activity levels. In 2014/15 an estimated **85.1% of Merton's adults, approximately 139,700 people, did at least ten minutes' walking at least once per week.**

58.2%

reported walking for at least ten minutes, five or more times per week.

These were higher proportions than the England average, and similar to levels seen in London (7).



6,700

adults cycled at least three times per week.

2014/15 estimates suggested 14.4% of Merton's adult residents, equating to around **23,600 people, cycled at least once per month**, and 4.1%, approximately 6,700 adults, used a bike at least three times per week. These figures are similar to those for London and England (7).

Being able to access and spend time in **green outdoor spaces, such as parks and nature areas**, can contribute to better physical and mental health and greater emotional wellbeing.

A 2014/15 survey estimated

11.1%

of Merton adults had spent time outside for health or exercise purposes in the past week.



This may have included time spent in urban or rural environments, but not routine shopping trips or people spending time in their own gardens (8). Levels appear to be similar in most of Merton's comparator boroughs, including Sutton and Kingston.

Obesity in Merton

OBESITY HAS SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES: ACTION IS NEEDED

Overweight and obesity, together termed '**excess weight**', are **major determinants of avoidable ill health and premature mortality.**

A **substantial proportion of Merton adults carry excess weight.** As a result, many are at greater risk of serious, long-term, yet avoidable, health consequences including:

**cancer
cardiovascular disease
diabetes
& depression.**

Evidence of these consequences can already be seen in Merton.

For example, the prevalence of **diabetes is increasing.** Estimates suggest, in 2016, **8.2% of Merton's adult population had diabetes.**

This equates to around

13,600

**adults with diabetes
in 2016.**



Rising to around

17,000

**adults with diabetes
by 2030.**

Without **urgent preventative action** this number will continue to rise. By 2030, it is predicted approximately 17,000 residents, 9% of Merton's adults, will have diabetes (9).

Helping Merton residents achieve and maintain a healthy weight is fundamental to **turning this trend around** and protecting health and wellbeing for the long term.