

# Research into obesity essay sample



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The area of focus for this study will be health concerns in contemporary society and then more specifically, the issue of being overweight. This is an important area of study because we need to recognise and do something about the growing number of overweight people in the U. K. Now, places called ‘ Fat Camps’ are being set up to help people become a safe weight and to teach them a healthy way of living. I am particularly interested in this area of study because it is becoming commonplace to see overweight people and I would like to find out more about it. I feel that there is not enough information about for us to access. From my reading into this area I have found out that:

Overweight means to be above the desired, required or usual weight for your height.

23% of young men and 19% of young women are classed as over weight.

8% of boys and 7% of girls are now classed as obese.

Just why is there so much obesity in our society?

25% of adults are not active at all

29% of girls and 44% of boys under the age of 15 do not take part in physical activity lasting 30mins or more outside school.

more than 60% of adults don’t get the recommended amount of regular exercise.

I will begin this project by looking at obesity rates in the young and health problems associated with being overweight. I will then focus on the idea of ‘

<https://assignbuster.com/research-into-obesity-essay-sample/>

fat camps' to see if they are a useful method of helping people to lose weight in comparison to other methods. Finally I will analyse what I have found out through my literature review to draw my own conclusions about the impact of fat camps and obesity rates. My final task will be to appraise how well I conducted the study and to suggest what else I might do in the future to extend it.

Review of literature:

Through this literature review I will focus on the use of fat camps in the country as a possible measure to reduce obesity in the young. Questions that I will be finding the answers to are:

1. Do fat camps work in reducing weight in the young?
2. What are the positive aspects of it as a means of reducing weight?
3. What are its problems/ limitations as a means of reducing obesity in the young?
4. How does it compare to other methods of fat reduction in the young?

Today, due to social and technological developments, there are health concerns, which are now affecting people of all ages. These are a result of a decline in physical activity, leading to an increase in obesity and cardiac problems.

According to the U. K government “ obesity is a hazard to health and a detriment to well-being – it is one of the most important medical and public health problems of our time.” (The Diet Information web site.)

<https://assignbuster.com/research-into-obesity-essay-sample/>

In the USA such things as ‘ Fat Camps’ were set up for young people with obesity problems. They have even been known to help children lose up to 5 stone in eight weeks under strict diet and fitness regimes. (BBC homepage.) Then in 1998 the first one was set up in the u. k in Leeds Metropolitan University. (Advanced P. E for Edexcel (2000)) Their approach is to look at a diet avoiding junk food, prevalent in today’s culture. They are trying to dismiss the ‘ eat less and exercise more ‘ attitude which is sometimes portrayed by the USA’s camps. The U. K’s camps realise the psychological effects of being overweight on people. They try and emphasize the importance of ‘ family based activities such as going to the park, ice skating and swimming ‘ (BBC homepage.) They combine exercise with lifestyle education. It includes a daily regime of exercise, sport and healthy eating.

From my research into the UK’s only weight loss camp, Carnegie International Camp at Leeds Metropolitan University, I have found that:

On arrival the youngsters, who have been hand picked for suitability, have their height, weight and body fat measured. However, all children have to present doctors reports showing they are all clinically overweight. (The Guardian, November)

Camp director Paul Gately is a former British junior athlete who has worked at similar camps in the US. His aim for every child is for them “ not necessarily to have lost any weight but they will gain muscle and lose fat.” Carnegie aims to change the lifestyle of the children who visit them; it gives them the skills to achieve a permanent change. (BBC News, January)

One of the problems, highlighted by the BBC hot topics website, is keeping the lost weight off. If the child comes home and none of the family members have altered their eating habits, improvements may be difficult to sustain. They learn how food and exercise influences their weight and are given ways to cope with their problems. All meals are prepared by a qualified dietician to ensure that food intake is in line with the aims of the camp.

The menu consists of a sensible low fat diet but also includes a wide range of foods that children eat on a daily basis. Portions are fully adequate for their needs and enable them to be active throughout the day. The students learn how to control portions, how to moderate their eating and how to select food which will be best for them. (Carnegie International Camp, January)

A support pack is given once they have left the camp; it contains hints on exercise, food and a healthy lifestyle, together with information about themselves and charts to indicate a record of their progress. Thus ensuring that weight loss is maintained throughout the year. (Carnegie International Camp, January)

Due to the huge success (judged by the number of students losing weight and keeping it off) in the 1999, 2000, 2001, and 2002 programmes, it will be run again this year. It is for children aged between 11 and 18, who want to lose weight, adopt a healthier lifestyle and make new friends over the summer. (BBC Health, November)

The workers at the camp have found that the children are confronted with psychological distress and have to fight against discrimination in all walks of life when they are large. (Carnegie International Camp, December)

<https://assignbuster.com/research-into-obesity-essay-sample/>

The camp believes that strong preventative treatment in childhood can reduce risks to health in later life. Not only does it help them lose weight but also gives them the necessary skills to maintain weight loss. (Leeds Metropolitan University, February)

All the children in the 2002 camp achieved weight loss, on average slimming down by approximately 4 pounds per week. . All this is achieved through a supervised programme of healthy eating, exercise and weight management. This also enables them to be more active and learn more. (Carnegie International Camp, December)

A typical day at camp involves a range of activities from basketball to rock climbing and mountain biking, all taught by qualified coaches. As a result of this, the students fitness levels increased by as much as 20%. On average 60-70% of children will continue to manage their weight following the camp. This compares with a 97% failure within three years with other conventional weight loss programmes. They aim to make sport enjoyable and give the children new confidence in their ability to take part. The students are also encouraged to participate in group discussions where issues of body weight are discussed – this then gives them an opportunity to discuss ways of coping with their problem. (Carnegie International Camp, December)

Independent research carried out by the University of Leeds, showed improved self-esteem and 70% were worrying less about weight, figure and appearance. Many of the 2002 children hope to attend the camp this summer as well. It has even attracted youngsters from as far away as Jordan, Italy and Saudi Arabia. (Carnegie International Camp, December)

From further research I have found out that type 2 diabetes linked with weight problems, which was once commonly associated with middle age is now being seen among young children. I also know that this country cannot afford a future epidemic of type 2 diabetes. It is becoming a serious concern that children will die before their parents. It appears that our society and eating habits are generally becoming more geared up to making more people overweight.

The success of the camp has led to an award from the National Heart Research Fund. The award will enable Carnegie to provide support and advice for children in the 9 months following the summer camp.

The award is an official endorsement of the camp being ‘one of the leading national organisations working for a healthy heart’. The National Heart Research Fund has also donated £25,000 to enable further research to continue. (Health Spectrum, February)

#### Case History:

Darren Debono was 13 and 20 stone when he first attended the camp. After a 6-week stay at the camp at the cost of £2000 he now weighs 16 stone. It has changed his attitude. Now he goes to the gym, circuit trains and exercises at home before, and after school. He also made lots of friends which he keeps in contact with throughout the year.

His mother said, “ Paul Gately has been criticised because the camp is so expensive, but there isn’t any amount of money great enough that I could

bestow on him because he has been my family's saviour." (Leeds Metropolitan University, February)

One problem that the camp does find is funding – a place on the course costs just under £2000 for six weeks and £795 for two weeks, but at the moment the NHS sponsors only 16 out of 75 applicants. (Health Spectrum, February)

Similar camps in the US have helped children lose up to five stone in eight weeks under strict diet and fitness regimes. Children in these camps are only allowed 1000 calories while the UK camps allow their students between 1300 and 2300 a day. Their menu includes roast beef, chicken fajitas and cottage pie. (Carnegie International Camp, December)

Other means of addressing the issue of obesity:

1. The government is now 'investing £581 million in P. E and sports facilities' and has also pledged that 'children will get at least two hours a week of physical activity'. (Taken from the Department of Health (DH) website.) Their aim is to encourage our children to become 'active adults' and therefore help to cut the risk of future life threatening illnesses.
2. Organisations called Healthy Living Centres which are funded by the National Lottery to the cost of £300 million are also helping the health of local communities, e. g. running diet and nutrition classes. (Government Teacher Training in Physical Education website.)
3. Television education through programmes on prime time TV. "Diet Trials" follows individuals trying to lose weight through various forms of dieting. The <https://assignbuster.com/research-into-obesity-essay-sample/>



aim being to make the public realise the dangerous issues involved in being overweight. However a draw back to this method is that it very rarely shows the participants using exercise as a method of weight loss. Therefore, people watching the programme may begin to think that all they have to do is eat less to lose weight and not include exercise.

4. Gyms are promoting a healthy lifestyle all over the country and offer discounts to involve all sorts of people. Also videos, books and magazines are now produced, aimed at people who are interested in their health and want to do something about their weight.

## Conclusion

I think the fact that I mentioned earlier, that all children taking part in the 2002 camp achieved weight loss, on average slimming down by approximately 4 pounds per week and increasing their fitness levels by 20% proves my theory that this camp is a success. Without places more like the Leeds camp obesity could become a major epidemic, so more establishments like this one could have an enormous benefit if set up.

I think that it is brilliant that the children are not put under strict rules; they can make conscious decisions and work out if they do really need that ‘last cake’. For example Paul Gately explains that “Its not about saying you cant eat chocolate, its about saying here is a range of chocolate deserts, as well as non-chocolate deserts, some much higher fat than others. After that they are given the choice.”

Even though the course is very expensive, surely it is more effective than surgery at a cost of many thousands of pounds, it must make more sense to invest in a child's health now, rather than in the future. For example, having to ask the NHS to pay for the replacement of joints in overweight people in 40 years time. Mr Gately is currently campaigning for funding to be put forward so that the cost to the participants can be reduced. To me, the price seems to be the most obvious barrier, in that only 40 places were filled last year when 150 were offered. This is a problem that most definitely needs to be tackled.

Another reason that I believe the camp is so effective compared to the other forms where weight loss is the main objective, is that it works to find out the reasons why a child has developed an eating problem. Gately explains, " If a child is going to succeed in losing weight permanently, it is crucial that the whole family is involved- rather than it being solely the child's ' problem' ". Sometimes the children even end up educating the parents.

If I was able to carry on my study further I would like to visit the camp and personally encounter how it works. Also I would find it very interesting to carry out a longitudinal study and to talk to some of its previous students and get first hand opinions from them. I do know that at the university they are carrying out further research into the camps effectiveness and I would be very interested to look into it. I would also like to study the US camps way of achieving weight loss and then compare it to the UK's way. From there I could try and find if just one weight loss camp in the UK is satisfactory, and maybe, if others were needed, where in the country they would be best situated.

I do realise that the subject is a very delicate one, however as a result of not discussing it there are far worse repercussions. If something is not done then these same children will appear again with heart disease and diabetes in 30 years time. I don't expect these overweight children to suddenly change into svelte figures but I do think they need help to understand how this excess of weight is harming them. Gately explains that " if a child really enjoys playing basketball and plays it for the next 20 years, that might keep the weight off them."