

Brits have biggest BMI in Europe!

British women are the most overweight in Europe and British men tip the scales as the third fattest as the average European body mass index (BMI) is revealed...

In the lead up to BMI 4 Life (11th – 24th May) – a campaign highlighting the life-and-death importance of BMI – the alarming survey published in the newsletter of the French National Institute of Demographic studies has revealed that British women on average have a BMI of 26.2, which is considered overweight.

French women have a BMI of 23.2, the slimmest in the EU, but worry more about being fat than those in any other EU country, while the typical British woman is overweight but convinced she is slim, highlighting the fact that many people don't know what BMI means and have no idea how it is measured.

Unsurprisingly the survey suggests that men across the EU are less concerned about their weight than women, although out of the 15 member countries only French and Dutch men fall within the ideal weight range and the rest are overweight.

The BMI 4 Life campaign, which runs from 11th – 24th May and is championed by weight-management experts LighterLife aims to highlight the very real dangers associated with excessive weight gain and the importance of reaching and maintaining a healthy BMI.

LighterLife is once again teaming up with The Stroke Association and is encouraging members of the public to get involved and show they care by visiting www.lighterlife.com/bmi4life and posting a message, taking a quiz and passing it onto their friends to help LighterLife increase awareness and raise money for The Stroke Association.

Sara Jamison, CEO at LighterLife says: "We are excited about supporting The Stroke Association and are encouraging everyone to post their messages of support, take the quiz, learn more about the risks associated with stroke and pass the message onto their friends to raise thousands of pounds for this very worthwhile charity.

Sara added: "More people than you realise are at risk of having a stroke and being overweight can increase this risk. Carrying extra weight around the waist is particularly dangerous as it increases the risk of stroke, heart disease and some cancers threefold."

Andrea Lane, Media Manager for The Stroke Association, said: "Many people don't realise that a stroke is a brain attack that happens when the blood supply to the brain is cut off and brain cells die. As the brain controls everything we do, think and feel, the damage can be devastating. Being obese can increase your risk of stroke by over 30 per cent so it is vital we all maintain a healthy body weight and a good diet.

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Notes to editors:

- BMI is widely used to establish if someone is a healthy weight for their height and can be calculated by dividing your weight in kilograms by your height in

metres squared. A BMI below 18.5 is regarded as underweight, the 18.5 - 24.9 band is seen as healthy, and a BMI over 25 is overweight while a BMI over 30 is clinically obese.

- Victoria Beckham has a BMI of 15.3 which is considered underweight and Chris Moyles has a BMI of 34.5 which makes him obese.
- Being overweight or obese increases your likelihood of having high blood pressure and cholesterol which are major risk factors for stroke. But strokes can be prevented. Losing weight and including regular physical activity can reduce your risk. Even moderate physical activity can reduce the risk by 27%.
- The Stroke Association is the only UK charity solely concerned with combating stroke in people of all ages. The charity funds research into prevention, treatment, better methods of rehabilitation and helps stroke patients and their families directly through its community services which include communications support, family and carer support, information services, welfare grants, publications and leaflets. The Stroke Association also campaigns, educates and informs to increase knowledge of stroke at all levels of society acting as a voice for everyone affected by stroke.
- LighterLife is a weight-loss and weight-management programme for people who are one stone or more overweight and with a body mass index (BMI) of 25 or above. Over 100,000 people have successfully lost weight with LighterLife since 1996.