

Under embargo
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Spare tyre health hazard: new survey reveals Scotland's ignorance of harmful hormones

- New joint charity campaign urges Scots to examine their waistlines -

A new survey today reveals that 96 per cent of people in Scotland are unaware that their beer bellies and muffin tops are generating higher levels of oestrogen and excess chemicals in their stomachs, putting them at risk of cancer, Type 2 diabetes and heart disease (1).

But worryingly, more than two thirds (69 per cent) of people admit to carrying excess weight around their middle, and more than half (67 per cent of women and 51 per cent of men) overestimate the waist measurement at which they become at risk (2).

The results of the survey, which questioned 2,085 adults in Great Britain, were released as Diabetes UK, Cancer Research UK and the British Heart Foundation (BHF) launched their new 'Active Fat' campaign to raise awareness of the dangers of carrying extra weight around your middle.

The charities are urging people to measure their waistlines and make positive changes to their lifestyles if they are at risk.

They have also produced a new web animation featuring a sinister fat cell, which helps to show people that instead of lying around harmlessly, our fat cells are actually very active and working around the clock to stimulate disease (3).

Andy Carver, Prevention & Care Adviser at British Heart Foundation (BHF) Scotland, said: "That 'harmless' spare tyre around your waist is actually a major health hazard. While you might be relaxing at home, your fat cells are working overtime to pump out excess hormones and other chemicals that can cause disease.

"Wrapping a tape measure around your middle takes just a few seconds, but it could be your vital first step towards a healthier a future."

The campaign is being supported by former 'Apprentice' television contestant and business woman Claire Young.

Ms Young said: "As someone whose family has been affected by heart disease and Type 2 diabetes, I know just how important it is to look after your health. My mum and I recently reduced our waistlines by making small, everyday changes to our lifestyles, and I'm encouraging others out there to measure their own waistlines and make changes if their health is at risk."

The charities are also calling for the European Parliament to support people to make healthier food choices by bringing in a single front-of-pack food labelling system across Europe.

Diabetes UK Care Advisor Libby Dowling said: “If you’re used to pounds and ounces, it’s extremely confusing to go into a shop that only deals in grams and kilograms. It’s the same with food labelling systems - we need one system that includes traffic light colours to help busy supermarket shoppers make informed food choices.”

Professor Jane Wardle, director of Cancer Research UK’s Health Behaviour Research Centre at University College London, said: “Little changes that can become daily habits are the best, as they usually require less effort and can act as the building blocks of a much bigger lifestyle picture. Waist size is likely to increase throughout life, so whatever your age, today is a good day to start improving your health.”

The survey also found that:

- Less than half (43 per cent) of men and women in Scotland have tried doing more **physical activity** in response to carrying excess weight around their middle
- In contrast, more than a quarter (26 per cent) have bought **bigger sized clothes** and one in ten (10 per cent) have **covered up** on the beach

To help people to trim their tummies, Cancer Research UK, Diabetes UK and the British Heart Foundation are sharing their top tips on losing weight through their joint campaign website.

People can learn more about active fat and take a lifestyle check at www.activefat.org.uk.

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To arrange an interview or for more information, please contact the BHF press office on 020 7554 0164 or 07764 290381 (out of hours) or email newsdesk@bhf.org.uk

Notes to Editors

- (1) All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from the YouGov Plc online survey. Total sample size was 2084 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 22nd - 24th February 2010. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).
- (2) Women are **at risk** of Type 2 diabetes and heart disease if their waist measurement is over 80cm (31.5 inches), and men are at risk from 94cm (37 inches). Women are **at high risk** if their waist is over 88cm (34.5 inches), and men are at high risk over 102cm (40 inches). **South Asian women** are at **high**

risk of heart disease and Type 2 diabetes from 80cm (31.5 inches), and **South Asian men** are at **high risk** from 90cm (35 inches).

- (3) Research suggests that the most toxic fat is intra-abdominal fat, which sits around your internal organs, as opposed to subcutaneous fat that sits just under the skin.

- **Twitter hashtag** #activefat