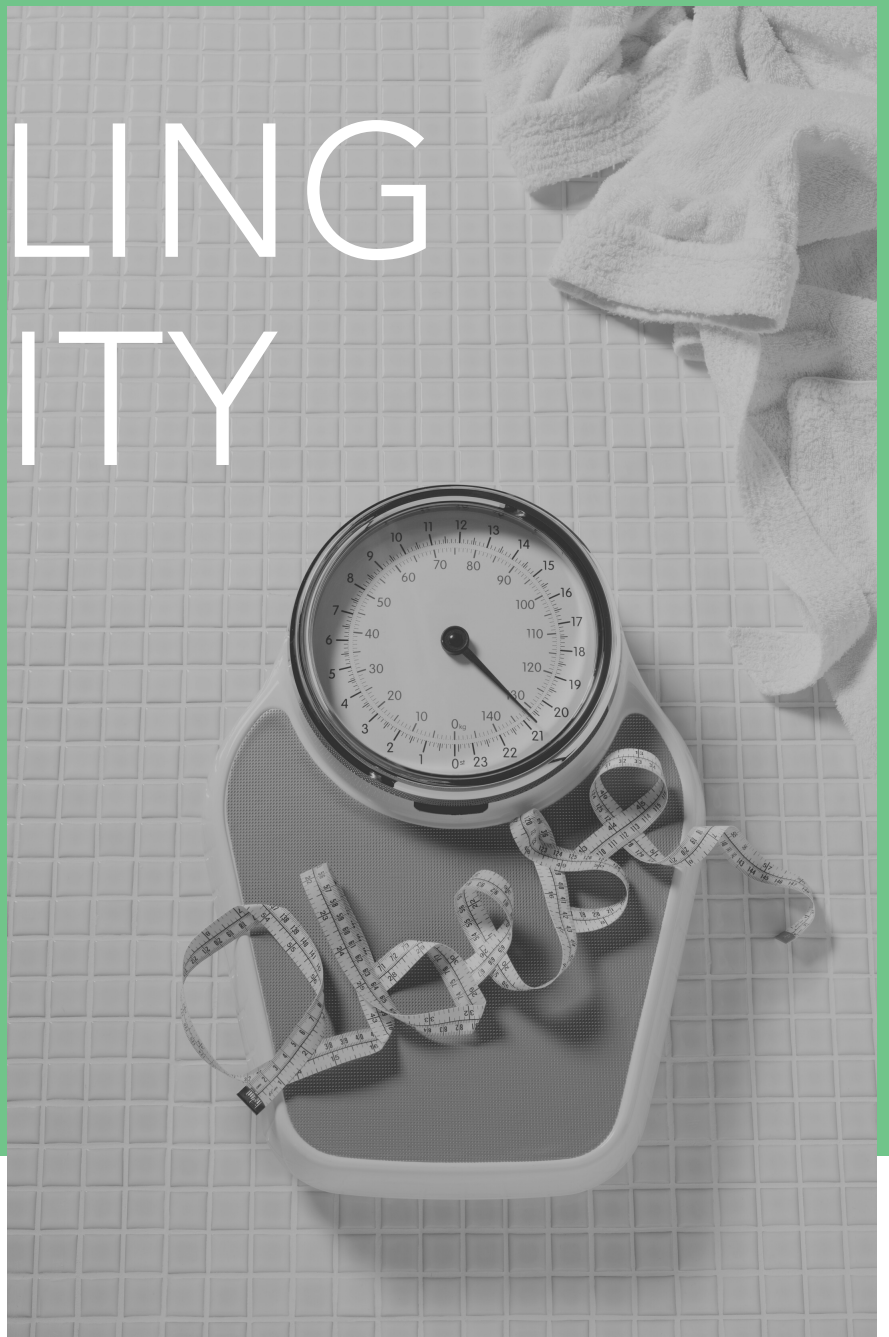


TACKLING OBESITY

July 2021



Preventive measures alone won't help reverse the obesity pandemic. Policy makers and governments across Europe must look into all available options, including formula foods



Prevention and management must go hand in hand

The number of obese and overweight people in Europe is increasing, an alarming trend that needs to be reversed, or, at the least, slowed down. Awareness around the severity of obesity and overweight is growing, particularly as the COVID-19 pandemic further demonstrated their impact on public health and healthcare services. Policymakers have taken steps to prioritise the issue, for example as part of the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan, EU4Health and the Farm to Fork (F2F) Strategy. Regrettably, however, current obesity policies put the focus on prevention, healthy eating and exercise, with little consideration towards those who are already obese.

Although regular exercise and a healthy diet are good advice to prevent overweight and obesity, EU policymakers also need to consider support measures for those who are already obese if we are to adequately and substantially reverse obesity rates. It is crucial to ensure consumers have access to safe and effective options that can help them lose and manage their weight.



Why tackling obesity matters

Obesity prevalence has almost tripled in many European countries in the last 40 years. Data suggests that 22.82% of the EU population was obese in 2016, compared to just 9.3% in 1975 [1]. Obesity is associated with reduced life expectancy while also being a gateway to many diseases, including type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, stroke, asthma, and several cancers. Evidence also suggests that those who are obese are more at risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19 [2].

Not only do we need to curb these risks for the sake of the health of EU citizens, bound to them are also severe costs for European economies that might hinder recovery from the current circumstances.

It is time for EU policymakers to put tackling obesity at the political forefront and ensure that:

- Alongside preventive measures, bigger emphasis is put on the treatment of obesity.
- Appropriate resources are allocated.

Total Diet & Meal Replacements (TDMR) Europe is pleased to be able to share some key considerations with policymakers on this urgent issue.

[1] Hannah Ritchie and Max Roser (2017) - "Obesity". Published online at [OurWorldInData.org](https://ourworldindata.org/obesity). Retrieved from: <https://ourworldindata.org/obesity> [Online Resource]

[2] Mahase, E., 2020. COVID-19: Why are age and obesity risk factors for serious disease?. *BMJ*, p.m4130.

Formula foods as a proven and effective measure to tackle obesity, overweight and related diseases

Total diet replacements (TDRs) are specifically formulated programmes that aim to replace the whole of the daily diet, while meal replacement products (MRPs) are intended as a substitute for one or two main meals per day. These products are highly regulated [3], effective and safe methods to help individuals lose and manage their weight. These programmes are nutritionally balanced and designed to provide the right amounts of nutrients. They can fill the gap between weight loss advice, often used for smaller weight loss (5-10 kg), and bariatric surgery for larger weight losses (25-40 kg). Their use can also significantly help reduce the risk of obesity-related conditions including cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes, sleep apnoea, osteoarthritis, several types of cancer and, in turn, public health spending on these issues [4].



In other words, formula diet TDR programmes deliver, in a short period of time, the amount of weight loss needed to achieve major health improvements and are a safe, cost-effective proven option for diabetes prevention and remission and other obesity comorbidities.

[3] TDRs fall under the scope of the Food for Specific Groups (FSG) Regulation. Current compositional and labelling requirements for TDRs are set out in Directive 96/8/EC, but are set to be replaced by a new Regulation to apply from 27th October 2022. MRPs are covered by general food legislation and indirectly through the conditions of use of the MRPs health claims.

[4] Kent, S., Aveyard, P., Astbury, N., Mihaylova, B. and Jebb, S.A. (2019), Is Doctor Referral to a Low-Energy Total Diet Replacement Program Cost-Effective for the Routine Treatment of Obesity?. *Obesity*, 27: 391-398. <https://doi.org/10.1002/oby.22407>

TDMR Europe aims to help public health professionals and policymakers develop a greater understanding of the relevance, role and application of TDRs and MRPs, and calls for a consistent approach across the EU to implement tools to effectively fight obesity and related diseases, using targeted interventions.

A vast amount of scientific literature proves that TDRs and MRPs can provide economical, viable and effective solution to tackle obesity.

The Diabetes Remission trial (DiRECT) [5], a cluster-randomised trial for weight loss, showed that a high proportion of people would engage with a TDR weight loss programme for up to 20 weeks and that a good proportion maintained their weight loss and diabetes remission after 1 and 2 years. For those who maintained more than 10kg weight loss after 2 years, diabetes remission could be seen in 2 out of 3 people.

A recently published 3-year study [6], under the Prevention of diabetes through lifestyle Intervention and population studies in Europe and around the World (PREVIEW), conducted on 1200 people with pre-diabetes showed an average of 10% weight loss with TDRs followed by a low glycaemic index (GI) diet gave better weight loss maintenance and reduced progression of diabetes.

The abovementioned studies make up just a fraction of the scientific evidence that exists. TDRs and MRPs programmes have been used for several decades and public health services have acknowledged the effective-

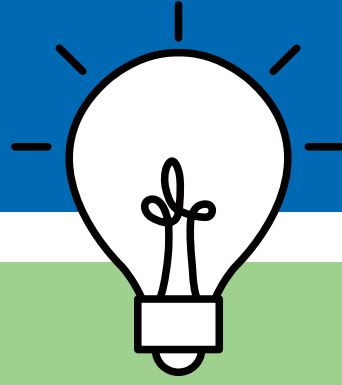


-ness and safety of TDRs to manage obesity and related diseases. For example, the UK's National Health Service (NHS) has introduced a Low Calorie Diet Programme [7] to provide thousands of people who are overweight and living with Type 2 diabetes access to TDR programs, as evidence showed their effectiveness.

[5] Lean MEJ et al Primary care-led weight management for remission of type 2 diabetes (DiRECT): an open-label, cluster-randomised Trial *The Lancet* 2018 391, p541–5; Lean MEJ et al 2019 Durability of a primary care-led weight-management intervention for remission of type 2 diabetes: 2-year results of the DiRECT open-label, cluster-randomised trial. *Lancet Diabetes and Endocrinology Online* March 6, 2019 [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/landia/article/PIIS2213-8587\(19\)30068-3/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/landia/article/PIIS2213-8587(19)30068-3/fulltext)

[6] Zhu, R., Larsen, T., Fogelholm, M., Poppitt, S., Vestenot, P., & Silvestre, M. et al. (2021). Dose-Dependent Associations of Dietary Glycemic Index, Glycemic Load, and Fiber With 3-Year Weight Loss Maintenance and Glycemic Status in a High-Risk Population: A Secondary Analysis of the Diabetes Prevention Study PREVIEW. *Diabetes Care*, dc203092. doi: 10.2337/dc20-3092

[7] NHS England – Low calorie diets to treat obesity and Type 2 diabetes - <https://www.england.nhs.uk/diabetes/treatment-care/low-calorie-diets/>



Ways in which EU policymakers can help

We would be delighted to arrange a meeting to discuss the above issues. In the meantime, we ask EU policymakers to:

- *Support a more ambitious role for the EU in public health matters and continue to recognise the complexity of obesity, while ensuring a clear focus on treatment as well as prevention.*
- *Consider issuing EU level guidelines on obesity management, while facilitating the sharing of information across Member States.*
- *Explore all options available, including the use of TDRs and MRPs, while understanding healthcare costs and potential savings from using formula foods.*
- *Make more funds available for research into obesity treatment and management, while creating more opportunities for industry to share their best practices.*

About TDMR Europe

We are Total Diet & Meal Replacements Europe (TDMR Europe), the European trade body for manufacturers and distributors of formula diet products, including total diet replacements (TDRs) and meal replacements (MRPs) which provide weight loss and weight management programmes for the overweight and obese.

Our members currently operate predominantly in the Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden, Finland, the Czech Republic, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Ireland, Cyprus, Greece and Poland.

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