

5 tips for communicating about children's health & food

These tips will help you build understanding and inspire action that improves children's health and reduces obesity

In partnership with

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↑ **More... talk of children's health**

Open by talking about improving children's health. Establish this before talking about obesity. And question when you need to talk about obesity specifically. Could you focus on what this is really all about: children's health and food?

↓ **Less... talk of obesity**

Avoid leading with talk of obesity. If you lead with obesity it will fire up unhelpful ideas about individuals, choices and willpower before you've even got started. Do refer explicitly to the change you want further into your message – whether that's to stem the tide of junk or to reduce obesity.

2

↑ **More... focus on the food around us**

Tell a story about how the environment shapes us – if there are only fast food shops by our college, for example, then chances are we'll eat more junk. A focus on the food around us helps people see how policy changes – like, say, a change in planning laws or advertising – could boost children's health.

↓ **Less... talk of individual choices**

People tend to think children's health – including obesity – is about individual choices. This mindset is strengthened through repetition. Minimise talk of 'choices', try 'options' instead.

3

↑ **More... talk of difference between places**

Emphasise, for instance, the food available to children in some places that isn't available to children in others. This taps into people's sense that there should be fairness between places.

↓ **Less... talk of difference between people**

Talking about children's health and obesity in terms of particular groups, for example children from low income families or specific ethnic groups, can trigger stereotypes and reinforce stigma. A focus on place helps avoid this.

4

↑ **More... solutions**

While people tend to think children's health is a big issue, they struggle to know what we can do about it beyond education. We need to show that we have many solutions, giving examples, and being clear that these policies can and do make a difference.

↓ **Less... talk of limited resources**

When we remind people of the limits to national resources, for example by talking about the cost of obesity to the NHS, it leads them to think that one group will get something at another's expense. This can make us question if people who are obese are 'deserving' and add to stigma.

5

↑ **More... explanation**

Explain how our environment affects our health; don't just assert that there's a link. Try talking about how junk food advertising engineers our tastes, or how where we live makes it harder to get healthy food or a lack of safe parks make it harder for children to run and play.

↓ **Less... reliance on numbers**

A stat or fact is not your story. Without context, data can easily be misunderstood, and won't change how people see the issue. But by providing cues, you can use data to help tell a story – explain what it means and tell people how to interpret it.

What next?

To learn more check out our [child health framing toolkit](#).