



# MEND

Mind Exercise Nutrition... Do it!

**"The MEND Programme is a fun, effective and practical lifestyle solution and its approach is in line with the current NICE consultation guidance."** Department of Health, Department for Education and Skills & Department for Culture, Media and Sport - *Choosing Health: Obesity Bulletin, Issue 1, 4th May 2006*



## What is MEND?

MEND is a community, family-based programme for overweight and obese children aged between 7-13 and their families. The multi-disciplinary programme places equal emphasis on **(M)ind**, **(E)xercise** and **(N)utrition**. It combines all the elements known to be vital in treating and preventing overweight or obesity in children, including family involvement, practical education in nutrition and diet, increasing physical activity and behavioural change. With an emphasis on practical, fun learning the programme is designed to deliver *sustained* improvements in families' diets, fitness levels and overall health. It is important to note that MEND is NOT a diet, and expressly does not encourage rapid weight loss. Rather, it is about *empowerment*: putting the child at the centre of a range of ways to make life changes in terms of physical activity, food, self confidence and personal development. By following the MEND principles, participants will lose weight naturally and thereby build a foundation for healthy living – for life.

## Who is behind MEND?

The MEND Programme has been developed over more than five years by the following leading experts in the UK:

- Paul Sacher (BSc Med Hons RD), a specialist dietician at Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children (GOSH), a Clinical Research Fellow at the UCL Institute of Child Health (ICH), the spokesperson for paediatric obesity for the British Dietetic Association, a trustee of the National Obesity Forum and a recognised author on the subject
- Dr. Paul Chadwick (BSc MA DClIn Psy), a clinical psychologist at the Health Behaviour Unit at University College London, a recognised expert in the field of childhood obesity and provider of behaviour change training to health professionals in the field

Over the last three years, a team of experienced professionals, specialising in areas including social and public health policy, urban regeneration, physical activity, IT and organisational development, has driven the development of what began as a research project into a replicable, cost-effective and scalable prevention and treatment intervention for childhood obesity.

## MEND in context

Obesity is currently one of the world's largest health and social problems. Indeed, according to Professor Barry Popkin of the University of North Carolina, obesity has become the number one form of malnutrition in the world, with the number of overweight people worldwide (1 billion+) now outnumbering the number of people who are undernourished (800 million).

Latest estimates from the International Obesity Task Force put the worldwide figure of overweight or obese school-age children at 155 million, or one in ten children. (Astrup, Obesity Reviews 2004). Of this number, around 30-45 million are classified as obese - accounting for as much as 2-3% of the world's children between the ages of 5-17!

Using the UK as an example, if current trends continue unabated, at least one third of adults, one fifth of boys and one third of girls will be obese by 2020. Alarming, UK-based research also shows that between 40-70% of overweight children will become obese adults (Reilly et al. 2003).

Given present trends, obesity will soon surpass smoking as the greatest cause of premature loss of life, as obesity leads to serious and harmful chronic illnesses such as cancer, diabetes and hypertension. An estimated one in three deaths from cancer, and one in three deaths from coronary heart disease are attributable to poor diet. In addition, obese and overweight children and adults are much more likely to suffer from bullying and psychological problems, including depression, binge eating, low self-esteem, low self-confidence and social isolation.

[www.mendprogramme.org](http://www.mendprogramme.org)



The Health Select Committee in the UK states that by 2010, the total overweight and obesity-related cost to the National Health Service (NHS) will run to around £7.4 billion annually, a level of strain which will make a publicly funded health service unsustainable. Similarly, the private sector experiences substantial productivity losses due to obesity-related work absences.

The social costs of obesity are also significant. Obesity introduces such alarming possibilities as large numbers of children dying before their parents. We are all partners together, public, private and voluntary sector alike, in addressing the obesity time bomb, since we all equally suffer the effects and consequences of obesity. We do not have the luxury of time – we have to act NOW to address this serious problem. MEND provides a scalable, credible and cost-effective means for organisations (health care providers, government agencies, private companies and charities) to make a real and measurable contribution towards solving a international problem – but on a tangible, “grass-roots” basis in their local communities. MEND doesn’t just add more talk about the problem – it offers a *solution*.

## Programme format

The core MEND Programme comprises 18 two-hour sessions over nine weeks. The sessions feature an hour of discussion (alternating between Mind (behaviour change) and Nutrition/Diet topics, and an hour of fun land- or water-based exercise. The discussion sessions emphasise practical, hands-on learning using specially designed games, visual demonstrations and activities, including a supermarket tour and a MEND-Friendly recipe tasting session. At least one parent must accompany each child at every session – in fact, many of the Mind sessions are intended for parents alone. MEND encourages one hour weekly subsidised exercise sessions for MEND ‘Graduates’ after the core Programme to aid sustainability.

## Why is the MEND approach successful?

- Integrated, multi-disciplinary approach to tackling obesity and overweight – placing equal emphasis on behavioural change, exercise and nutrition
- Based on group learning – shown to be very powerful and to improve motivation, participation and response
- NOT a diet – but rather teaches basic, easy-to-understand skills about how to eat and live more healthily – for life
- Very high attendance and retention rates (92% mean attendance on the research trial) – because the emphasis is on learning by having fun!
- Facilitates achievement of public sector objectives, e.g. public service agreement targets; multi-agency working
- Practical and hands-on - encouraging participation in games, visual demonstrations and activities
- Parental / carer involvement is mandatory - essential to ensure that families incorporate what they learn into their daily routines and sustain long-term benefits
- Well suited for private sector partnering, e.g. marketing, CSR, advisory work, staff volunteering, sponsorship

## Is there research supporting MEND?

MEND is both evidence-based & outcome-driven. The Programme’s successful feasibility study, which showed statistically significant results in key outcome measures, has been peer-reviewed and written up in the Journal of Human Nutrition & Dietetics (Sacher 2005). MEND is currently being researched in the form of a multi-site RCT under the auspices of the Institute of Child Health at Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children in London. This data will form one of the largest bodies of evidence on the effectiveness of a community-based child obesity intervention in the UK.

## How can you get involved or support MEND?

To find out more about the MEND Programme, learn how you may be able to partner with MEND or discuss how you can go about implementing a MEND Programme in your area, please contact Ulla Stauch, MEND’s Development Director, on +44 (0)870 609 1405 or at [ulla.stauch@mendprogramme.org](mailto:ulla.stauch@mendprogramme.org).

# What do others say about MEND?

## From Academia:

"As Director of the Medical Research Council's Childhood Nutrition Research Centre, the largest Centre of its type in Europe, it is my job to identify important research priority areas in the interest of population health. There can be no question that the current epidemic of obesity, with its origins in childhood, is one of the most critical health issues today. The MEND Programme is an exciting approach to child obesity, with current research being undertaken at the Institute of Child Health.

This popular community-based programme, if nurtured at this stage, has the potential to underpin effective national strategies for obesity treatment and prevention. This has immense implications in terms of promoting a healthy lifestyle in Britain and reducing the risk of disease in later life. I cannot recommend this research programme more strongly at this critical stage in MEND's development".

*(Professor Alan Lucas, Director MRC CNRC, UCL Institute of Child Health)*

## From the Healthcare Sector:

"We have ample evidence of the extreme prevalence of childhood obesity in the population – I see it in my practice every day. We also have compelling evidence regarding the illnesses which it leads to, and the fact that this risk can be significantly reduced through weight management and getting people to eat more healthily and exercise more regularly. The MEND Programme goes one step further & provides evidence that weight management can be successfully undertaken across a population in a community setting. I am excited that, with the advent of practice-based commissioning, GP practices will soon be able to commission evidence-based solutions such as MEND directly."

*(Dr. David Haslam, GP and Clinical Director, National Obesity Forum)*

"MEND demonstrates partnership working at its very best. Everyone gave a little bit to deliver the whole programme, yet it met everybody's individual targets." *(Sarah Barnes, Public Health Clinician, Waveney PCT)*

"The management of child obesity in a hospital-based setting is recognized to be ineffective. The MEND project is a validated system incorporating activities designed to increase the children's

self-esteem, provide children and families with the knowledge they need to choose food sensibly, and an exercise programme designed to stimulate and encourage their involvement in these activities. It is likely that this would have a greater chance in the long term of addressing the problem for obese children" *(Dr. C.E. Daman Willems, Divisional Director of Paediatrics, The Lewisham Hospital NHS Trust)*

"The MEND Programme offers a coherent, robust response to childhood obesity which delivers significant, proven outcomes in the following areas:

**Healthy Eating:** ...particularly effective in changing entrenched eating habits  
**Improved physical activity:** [MEND has] a significant impact on BMI and waist circumference of participants. More impressive is ... that both children and parents find they enjoy it and continue regular exercise long after graduating from the MEND Programme.

**Improved mental well-being:** The [approach] ensures that the MEND Programme has a significant impact on reducing common mental health disorders" *(Amanda Hallson (RD), Specialist Dietitian – Obesity, Langbaourgh PCT, N. Yorks)*

## From Other Public Sector Agencies:

"The MEND Programme is a fun, effective and practical lifestyle solution and its approach is in line with the current NICE consultation guidance." *(Department of Health, Department for Education and Skills & Department for Culture, Media and Sport - Choosing Health: Obesity Bulletin, Issue 1, 4th May 2006)*

"MEND is exactly the sort of programme we are encouraging Local Authorities to put in place as part of their service provision through the Extended Schools Programme." *(John Morley, Director TDA-D (Central Extended Schools Implementation Agency)*

"From my research, I believe that MEND has the potential to be a very effective tool in addressing childhood obesity." *(Julian Stevens, Leisure Development Manager, Worthing Borough Council)*

"We are committed to giving young people the best start in life and MEND is a shining example of how we can help improve the lives of children suffering from obesity and offer practical support to their families". *(Steven Bullock, Mayor, London Borough of Lewisham)*



## From the Private Sector:

" Working with MEND has given us access to specialists who have helped us to successfully develop our own messaging on-air and on-line, whilst our sponsorship of MEND programmes has enabled us to see the direct benefits of positive communication and education to both kids and their parents."

*(Joanne Barlow, Vice President Network Services, Turner Broadcasting.)*

## From the Charitable Sector:

" The MEND Programme offers a holistic approach to the issues of overweight and obesity. It is about empowerment, putting the child at the centre of a range of ways of making life changes, in terms of physical activity, food and nutrition and personal development issues such as self-confidence and self-esteem.

The family-based approach ensures that key messages are also taken back to the home. Most importantly it is a fun programme that promotes inclusion and self-determination, it is about long-term solutions." *(LOUISE DISS, Director of TOAST (The Obesity Awareness & Solutions Trust)*

## From Other Community Partners:

" Currently, there are no services in the area where we can refer these children for advice/support. We feel very enthusiastic about the MEND Programme as we would be able to refer children to the Programme. We would like to give the MEND Programme our support." *(Three school nurses in Lewisham)*

" I highly recommend the programme to any child who is struggling with their weight and wants to do something pro-active about getting fitter and healthier!" *(David Sheepshanks, Chairman of Ipswich Town Football Club)*

## From Parents:

" I would just like to say a big 'Thank You' for all your help and support on the course, I really do feel you came to our rescue at a time when I had all but given up. I had been trying to get help for a long time for Billy but all the advice seemed to be was 'put him on a diet' (as if it's as easy as that!). The course gave us lots of positive ideas and enabled us to tackle this issue together. I am really really grateful."

learned on the MEND Programme, I was able to help boost my daughter's self confidence."

" I wish more parents knew there was a solution like MEND."

" I don't have to wait for Michael to catch up with me on walks anymore. He has to wait for ME these days!"

" I've ended up with a child who has much more confidence and who now enjoys sport activities."

" I never thought I would see the day when (my child) would enjoy exercise."

" Even though only my daughter and I attended MEND, our whole family has benefited from it. We don't have sugary drinks in our house at all anymore and are aware of sugar and fat content in all our meals and snacks"

" Being on MEND was 100% worth it. I have recommended it to many of my friends and acquaintances"

" I think the key to MEND's success is having both the parent and the child on the programme. It's very important that the child doesn't just think that it's mummy being an ogre and stopping them from having treats, but to see it for themselves"

" MEND has improved our family relationships so much. We actually spend time together now - for the first time in a long time - real mummy and son time!"

" Before going on MEND, my daughter's self-esteem was diminishing through bullying and peer pressure and through failing to accomplish the unrealistic goals she set for herself. By applying what we

## From Children:

" I never liked wearing jeans before, now I wear them all the time and I even had to put an extra hole in my belt!"

" I won an athletics trophy for performance at the athletics school day - something I never dreamed of accomplishing before being on MEND!"

" Through the MEND programme, I learned that it wasn't only what I eat, but how much I eat. Before, I would often eat just because I was bored. MEND helped me to break this habit"

" I can honestly say that there wasn't any part of the Programme I didn't enjoy."

" The only thing I didn't like about the MEND Programme is that it had to end!"



## Contact us

For more information on the MEND Programme, please visit [www.mendprogramme.org](http://www.mendprogramme.org), email us on [info@mendprogramme.org](mailto:info@mendprogramme.org), or call us on +44 (0)870 609 1405.