

We're heading towards the season of eating well and being merry. But should we be concerned that such excesses could lead to more time in hospital? Our analyst Dr David Lemon examines local obesity data.



Obesity: excess weight could lead to hospital admissions

By [Dr David Lemon](#)

I recently wrote about [how a poor diet and high blood pressure can lead to an early death](#) and a poor quality of life in later years. As weight affects both of these, we went little further and looked at how it contributes towards poor health.

We have been looking at obesity-related hospital admissions across Dorset. What do I mean by related? It's anyone who was admitted to hospital directly or indirectly because of weight

problems. Or where a health professional has identified a weight issue while someone was in hospital.

If obesity was the direct cause of a hospital visit then we say they have a 'primary diagnosis' of obesity. If it was something else then we say there is a 'secondary diagnosis' of obesity.

On the rise

The hospital data tells us that the total number of obesity-related admissions has risen. This is from about 1,500, in 2011/12, to more than 10,000 in 2015/16.

There are two possible explanations for this. One is that there are more obese – or at least more ill obese – people out there. But another explanation could be that hospitals have improved the way they record obesity.

In any case, the recorded obesity level has increased. Either through more obese people or the true level just being under reported for years.

Cause and effect

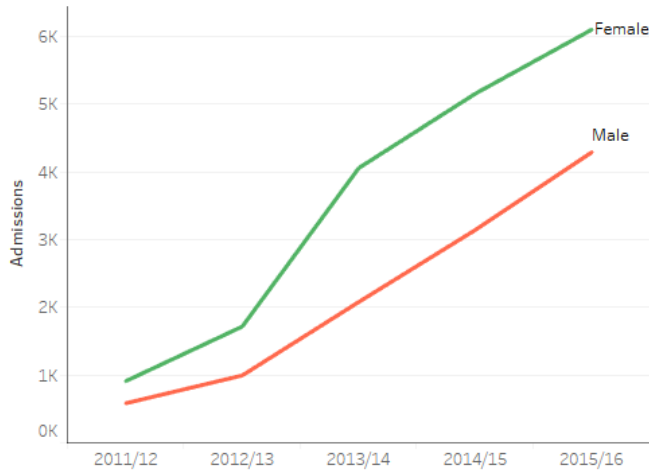
One interesting thing to look at is the primary diagnosis of people with obesity as a secondary diagnosis. What condition were they admitted for that their weight could be impacting on?

When we do this we find that there are three groups of conditions that stand out:

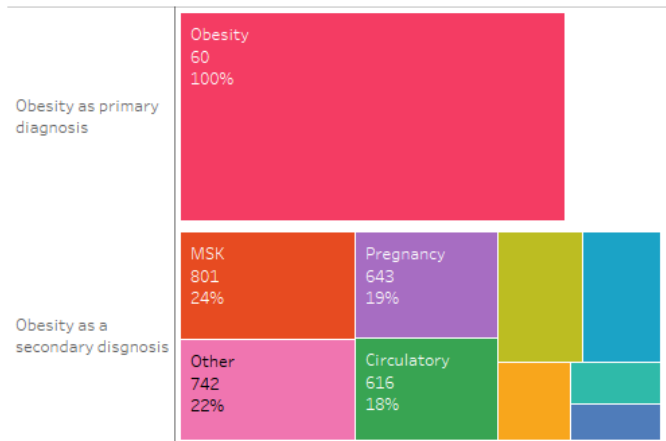
- Those related to circulatory problems.
- Those related to pregnancy.
- Those related to muscle and skeleton problems (MSK).

MSK are the largest group making up about a quarter of all obesity related admissions. Digging a bit further we find that these are mostly related to hip and knee problems.

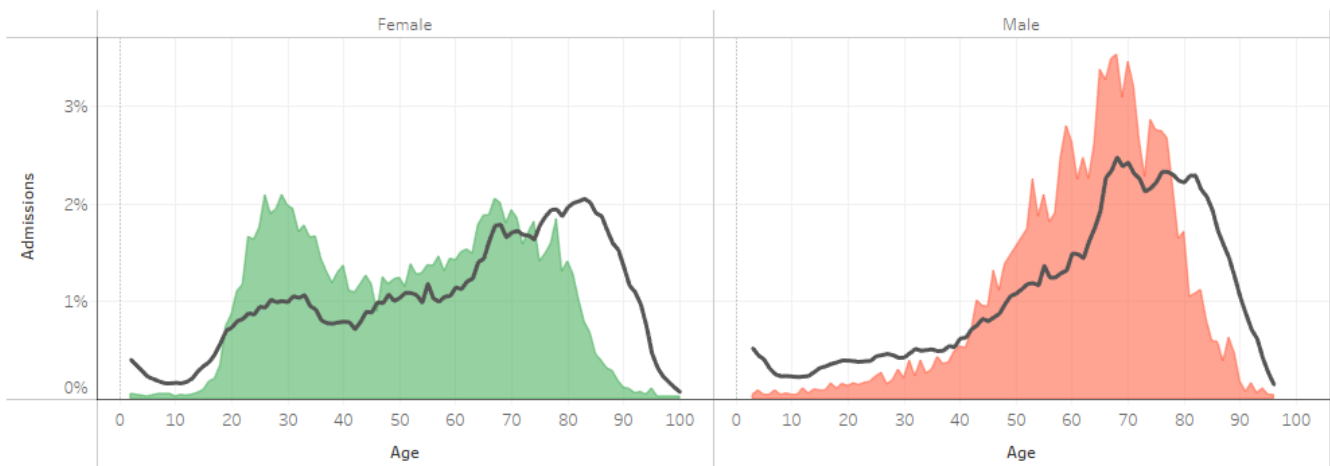
Number of admissions related to obesity



Primary diagnosis of people where obesity is a secondary diagnosis



Age distribution of obesity related admissions (black line represents admissions for any reason)



Expanding chartlines: The rises and main causes of obesity hospital admissions.

Age and obesity

It's worth looking at the age at which people have a hospital stay with an obesity-related condition.

For men, the older you are the more likely you are to need to go to hospital for something related to obesity. Although it's interesting that people over 80 will be less likely to have a hospital stay related to obesity.

This could be because during the natural ageing process older people tend to lose weight. Or

that people with obesity don't live as long.

For women, while we see a similar ageing pattern, there is also an earlier peak in admissions between the ages 21 to 39.

It's not surprising that these are almost all related to pregnancy (the average age of a first time mother is 28). But what is interesting is obese mothers are about twice as likely to suffer complications during pregnancy. There's information about this on the [NHS Choices website](#).

So, now you're all ready for that Christmas binge, relax and enjoy it. But you may want to think about some exercise in the New Year. If you do decide you want to lose some weight, support and advice is available through [LiveWell Dorset](#).

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