

The MEND™ Programme

What and Who We Are

The MEND Programme is a holistic, multi-disciplinary prevention and treatment programme for overweight and obesity, aimed at children between 7-12 and their parents / carers. Designed by leading experts in paediatric dietetics and psychology in response to the growing obesity epidemic and the corresponding lack of successful treatment approaches currently available, the MEND Programme is playing a crucial, pioneering role in the fight against obesity. It is designed to deliver *sustained* improvements in families' diets, fitness levels and overall health. As such, it is expressly NOT a diet, but rather it is a foundation for healthy living – for the rest of people's lives!

MEND is all about **empowerment**: putting the child at the centre of a range of ways of making life changes, in terms of physical activity, food, nutrition, self confidence and personal development. It places equal emphasis on exercise, behavioural modification, nutrition and diet (all the key elements recognized by medical experts as being vital in preventing obesity on a sustained, long-term basis) and is both practical and educational. Above all, however, it is FUN!

The MEND Programme is both evidence-based & outcome-driven. The Programme's highly successful pilot has been peer-reviewed and written up in the Journal of Human Nutrition & Dietetics (Feb 2005). As such, it is a credible and scalable vehicle to meet the government's objective of halting the annual rise in obesity amongst under 11-year olds by 2010. The research into the Programme is supported by the Department of Health and the Institute of Child Health. Critically, the pilot MEND programme showed statistically significant results in such important measures as waist circumference, cardiovascular fitness and self-esteem, as well as other benefits including reduced bullying and improved family relationships.

The Need MEND Meets

MEND exists to combat the growing and urgent problem of paediatric obesity, with its enormous financial and social implications for the nation. Given current trends, obesity will soon surpass smoking as the greatest cause of premature loss of life in the UK! This is because obesity is known to lead to a number of serious and harmful illnesses, including cancer, diabetes, hypertension and depression. In addition, obese children are much more likely to suffer from psychological problems, including binge eating, low self-esteem and low self-confidence, isolation and humiliation.

Many of the statistics are well known. According to the Health Survey for England published in 2002, the prevalence of obesity in children aged 2 to 10 increased from 9.9% in 1995 to 13.7% in 2003, and to almost 17% amongst older children aged 8-10. Moreover, there is a high chance (40 to 70% - Reilly et al. 2003) that overweight children will become obese and that obese children will become obese adults. Children who progress to become obese adults have a far greater risk of serious health problems, with a twofold risk of dying prematurely (before the age of 60) from ischaemic heart disease (Gunnell et al, 1998). Recent research conducted at Barts and the London and Newham University Hospital NHS Trusts indicated that as many as 95% of children with Type 2 diabetes were either overweight or obese.

Proven
Innovative
Cost-effective
Integrated
Family based
Treat & prevent
Fun

Successful pilot
results reviewed
and published

Research
sponsored by
Department of
Health and
Institute of Child
Health

Rapidly
increasing
problem

Many serious
associated
medical
conditions

Massive cost to
the nation

The National Audit Office predicts that by 2010, the total obesity-related cost to the nation will run to £3.6 billion annually (*Tackling Obesity in England*, February 2001), placing huge strain on public resources. The social costs of obesity are also enormous and forecast to rise rapidly - introducing such alarming possibilities as large numbers of people dying before their parents.

We believe that MEND offers a credible, sustainable solution to combat these increasing costs, encourage healthy lifestyles and healthy eating habits.

How Does The MEND Programme Work?

The key to MEND's success is an *integrated* approach, combining **all** the elements the medical community know are vital in preventing and treating overweight / obesity: family involvement, increasing physical activity, reducing inactivity, dietary education and behavioural modification (Summerbell et al. Cochrane Review 2004). MEND is an acronym, standing for: a healthy **M**ind, sufficient **E**xercise, good **N**utrition and a balanced **D**iet.

The MEND Programme is well-structured and practical, whilst simultaneously making the learning engaging and fun for children. It comprises 18 2-hour sessions, typically conducted in a local leisure centre on two evenings per week over a school-term. Each session comprises one hour of learning, focusing either on Mind or Nutrition / Diet, and one hour of fun, group-based Exercise. At least one parent / carer should accompany each child, as the programme is as much about educating the them about how they can support and motivate their children, as it is about teaching the children themselves.

In brief, the programme comprises:

- **Mind** – 8 sessions to improve self-esteem, increase understanding of behavioural modeling and to help families overcome difficulties in interacting with food and each other, using tools such as goal and reward setting, stimulus control, and education about internal and external triggers.
- **Exercise** – 18 sessions of fun activities and group play on land and in water to build up strength and fitness. The exercises are geared to the fitness levels and physical constraints of overweight and obese children. They are graded and structured and involve group play so that everyone can join in and nobody feels left out.
- **Nutrition & Diet** – 8 sessions focussing on simple and practical healthy-eating techniques (e.g. low fat, low sugar, low salt, portion control, 5 a day etc), combined with cutting-edge scientific advice on reducing foods with a high Glycaemic Index (GI). The focus on practical education encourages participants to sample special low-GI MEND recipes and go on a supermarket tour, which educates children about food labels and allows them to apply their new-found knowledge in everyday life.

MEND provides a comprehensive teaching manual and a full set of “kit”, containing **all** the teaching aids needed to administer the program (including games, sample recipes, take-home handouts, posters, equipment needed for demonstrations, paper, pens etc.) The manual has been written specifically to ensure that not only experts, such as dietitians and psychologists and community health workers, but also non-experts, such as teachers, fitness instructors and community volunteers, can administer the programme successfully.

M is for Mind
E is for Exercise
N is for Nutrition
D is for Diet

18 x 2 hr evening sessions per school term

Behavioural modelling, goals & rewards, stimulus control, triggers

Fun and structured land & water exercises

Healthy eating & low Glycaemic Index (GI).

Practical – includes cooking and supermarket tour

Comprehensive teaching manual for all lessons: Practical, structured and FUN – critical for attendance



Why Does MEND Work?

- MEND takes an integrated, multi-disciplinary approach
- MEND is a group-based programme, not a one-on-one programme. Group-based learning has been shown to be more powerful and also improves motivation, participation and response.
- The attendance rate is high (78% in the pilot) because the emphasis is on learning by having fun, and we all know that children love to have fun!
- The Programme is practical hands-on and fun - encouraging participation in games, visual demonstrations and activities, as well as a supermarket tour and cooking demonstration.
- Parental / carer involvement is mandatory - and essential to ensure that families incorporate what they learn into their day-to-day routines and the benefits are sustained over the long term.
- It is NOT a diet, but rather teaches life skills about how to eat and live more healthily

Research Data shows statistically significant improvements over 3 and 6 months e.g. blood pressure down by 18.6 mm of mercury over 6 months

How Can Companies get Involved in Supporting MEND?

There are many different opportunities for sponsorship – general philanthropic giving to support the overall growth and outreach of MEND, to reach (and benefit) as many obese children as possible. Unspecified giving allows us to use the funds where they are most needed.

That said, if companies would prefer to specify that their funds be used for a specific purpose, that would be equally welcomed. No contribution is too small!

A few hypothetical examples of specified sponsorship might be:

- Sponsoring 100 places for underprivileged children from South East London (or wherever the company has a geographic base, for example)
- Funding leisure centre venue hire and/or the purchase of gym equipment needed for the programme
- Sponsoring the training of MEND trainers and the Kit needed to run the programme (also offering potential merchandising opportunities)

What are the Benefits to Corporate Sponsors Investing in MEND?

- The company's corporate reputation and brand image are enhanced by virtue of being seen to make a meaningful contribution to an urgent social and health crisis facing the UK.
- It allows a company to practically demonstrate its commitment to delivering on its corporate social responsibility agenda and goals (in a way that also has potential commercial benefits for the company)
- It will increase brand awareness in key target markets and add value to marketing campaigns by providing the potential for increased sales and profits
- The company will receive positive media coverage and valuable PR opportunities
- It allows the company to foster direct links with the local communities in which it operates and improve its image as a "good neighbour"
- It provides a vehicle for networking with other companies focussed on the healthy eating and obesity agenda and thereby gain a platform for linking with local authorities, governmental departments and other influential stakeholder bodies
- It will increase management's knowledge of the issues surrounding the obesity crisis, thereby enhancing their understanding of how to position the company's services or products appropriately for greatest commercial and social impact
- It provides a vehicle for corporate employees to get involved in volunteering activities eg. running MEND programmes sponsored by the company
- Overall, it improves the general business environment by applying the skills and experience gained through an association with MEND to promote healthy lifestyles and healthy communities!

What Do Others Say About MEND?

We are very excited and confident about MEND's future. There is tremendous momentum behind, and enthusiasm for, the programme. Every day we receive emails from interested parties – ranging from parents wanting to know where the nearest MEND Programme is for their children, to individuals wanting to be MEND trainers. Our research programme is ongoing, and continues to receive very positive and widespread press coverage.

Below are just some of the representative comments we have received about MEND, both from local thought leaders and industry experts, as well as from actual children and parents who attended previous MEND programmes:

“Very useful as we have learnt how to eat healthily as a family.”
(Parent)

“MEND has improved our family relationships so much.”
(Parent)

“MEND has taught me which foods I should eat more of and which foods are really bad for me.”
(9 year-old child)

“I never thought I would see the day when (my child) would enjoy exercise.”
(Parent)

“I would say to all young people that this is a really fun programme and definitely worth getting involved in. It will not only give them some really useful and helpful tips about healthy living and healthy eating, but will also help them to get fit...and have lots of fun whilst doing so! When I was younger I was often a bit overweight and I would have loved to have had this kind of help. 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!”
(Chairman of a local town football club)

“We are a group of school nurses working in the XXX area. We have identified a number of children who are obese and overweight. There are no services in the area where we can refer these children for advice / support. We feel very enthusiastic about the MEND Programme and would be able to refer children to the Programme. We would like to give the MEND Programme our support.”

Three school nurses – supporting a specific programme

“I think that the vision of the MEND Programme is a worthy one. ... I am sure that the Programme would be of great benefit to [the local school] and the local community in general....”

Head Teacher, Local Primary School

“The MEND Programme will provide support to young people and their families in addressing the difficult issues surrounding obesity and weight gain. As a clinician, I would recommend this project to you wholeheartedly”

Director of Public Health

Excellent
feedback...

... from a range
of sources

Conclusion

We are all partners **together** in the common battle against the “obesity time bomb”. This is a crisis of potentially epidemic proportions that could have major health, social and cost implications for the entire nation. ANY opportunity to work together in being part of the solution to this problem would therefore seem optimal. In so doing - everyone comes away a winner.

Obesity affects all of us and is our common challenge. Please join us in this important battle and become part of the solution!

For further information on how MEND can be incorporated into your current sponsorship, cause-related marketing or social responsibility initiatives, please contact Ulla Stauch, Development Director for MEND, either by either email or telephone on:

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- w. www.mendprogramme.org

In closing, please also do look at the MEND movie (from the research pilot) on www.mendprogramme.org. It will give you a far better sense of the programme – including the FUN that is had by all – than any words on a page!

