

# Strategy for the Prevention and Management of Obesity in South Africa

2023-2028



**health**

Department:  
Health  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA





health

Department:  
Health  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

*Strategy for the Prevention and Management of Obesity in South Africa, 2023 - 2028*  
© National Department of Health, 2023

This publication is intended to support nutrition activities and may be freely quoted, reproduced and distributed, provided that the source is acknowledged.

Distribution for remuneration is not permitted.

Permission from the copyright holder is required for changes to the format of this publication.

Developed by and obtainable free of charge from:

National Department of Health

Private Bag X828

Pretoria

0001

Tel: (012) 395 8000

The Directorate: Nutrition within the National Department of Health is responsible for co-ordination of this Strategy.

Photo credits: Cover pictures obtained from

Recommended citation:

National Department of Health (NDoH). 2023. *Strategy for the Prevention and Management of Obesity in South Africa, 2023 – 2028*. Pretoria, South Africa.

**Disclaimer:** This document has been prepared with all due diligence and care, based on the best available information at the time of publication. The department holds no responsibility for any errors or omissions within this document. Any decisions made by other parties based on this document are solely the responsibility of those parties. Information contained in this document is from several sources and as such does not necessarily represent government or departmental policy.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

FOREWORD .....	5
MESSAGE .....	6
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	7
ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS .....	9
GLOSSARY OF TERMS .....	10
CHAPTER 1 .....	12
Executive Summary .....	12
1.1 Background.....	12
1.2 Approach and scope.....	13
1.3 Organisation of this document.....	14
1.4 Conclusion .....	15
CHAPTER 2 .....	16
Background.....	16
2.1 Introduction.....	16
2.2 Understanding obesity .....	16
2.2.1 Key drivers of obesity .....	17
2.2.2 Obesity in South Africa .....	18
2.2.3 The cost of obesity .....	20
2.3 Addressing obesity .....	21
2.3.1 International best practices .....	22
2.3.2 National best practices.....	24
2.4 The policy and legislative framework.....	24
2.4.1 International commitments .....	25
2.4.2 National policy, legislation and plans.....	26
CHAPTER 3.....	29
Approach and methodology.....	29
3.1 The 2015 – 2020 Obesity strategy review.....	29
3.1.1 Review process.....	29
3.1.2 Stakeholder engagement .....	30
3.2 Update of the 2023 – 2028 Obesity Strategy .....	32
CHAPTER 4.....	34

Implementation, monitoring and evaluation plan.....	34
4.1 Implementation, monitoring and evaluation plan per strategic objectives and costs .....	35
4.2 Summary of the estimated additional costs per strategic objective per year .....	46
Addendum.....	48
Key supporting documents .....	48
1. Best Practices Report .....	48
2. Review and stakeholder engagement reports .....	48
3. Costing report.....	49
References.....	50

## TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Contextual framework of influencers of obesity (Adapted: Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory) .....	18
Figure 2: Prevalence of obesity in South Africa .....	19
Figure 3: Morbidity due to obesity.....	19
Figure 4: Overarching review process.....	29
Figure 5: Adapted Theory of Change.....	30
Figure 6: High level Theory of Change for the updated Strategy for the Prevention and Management of Obesity in South Africa (2023 - 2028) .....	33

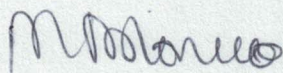
## MESSAGE

---

A review of studies in the country has shown that obesity has increased dramatically in adults over a period of 20 years. In addition, the prevalence obesity in children 6 – 14 years of age is higher than the global average in school children. The causes leading to the high rates of overweight and obesity in the country are multifactorial. The nutrition transition from minimally processed and locally food to readily available and cheap ultra-processed food and drinks that are high in sugar, salt and/or fat are among the key factors that have contributed to the problem. In addition, sedentary lifestyles and lack of available and safe physical activity facilities and opportunities contribute to the problem.

It has become important to create enabling environments where people can have access to available healthy food and physical activity opportunities and to receive appropriate nutritional information to make decisions that will contribute to healthy eating habits and lifestyles. Legislation to restrict advertising of unhealthy food and beverages to children is also paramount if we want to halt the rise of obesity into the next generation. This strategy also seeks to capacitate health workers to counsel and manage obese persons and to monitor the rate of obesity through the health system.

Furthermore, the findings of the National Dietary Intake Survey conducted in 2022 will help to refine the actions that are outlined in the strategy as well as guide further fiscal measures and research that would be necessary to address obesity in the country in the next five years.



**Dr S M Dhlomo, MP**

Deputy Minister: Health

Date: 31/03/2023

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

---

It concerns the National Department of Health that obesity is a public health challenge that is also contributing to the rising burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in our country. I am committed to ensure that coordination of the Strategy for the Prevention and Management of Obesity in South Africa (2023 – 2028) will contribute to empower South Africans to make healthy choices by enabling equitable access to healthy food, physical activity opportunities and a capacitated health care system that supports the prevention and management of obesity.

I would like to thank the following individuals and organisations who contributed to the update of this Strategy:

### 1. Obesity Strategy management team

Ms Rebone Ntsie (NDoH)  
Ms Maude de Hoop (NDoH)  
Ms Vimla Moodley (BHPSA)  
Ms Dianne Morran (Project coordinator (BHPSA))

### 2. Review team experts

Prof Thandi Puoane (University of the Western Cape)  
Prof Herculina Salome Kruger (North West University)  
Prof Makama Andries Monyeke ((North West University)  
Dr Ijeoma Peace Edoke (PRICELESS SA)  
Ms Makoma Melicca Bopape (University of Limpopo)  
Dr Jeanne Adele Lubbe (University of Stellenbosch)

External support to the review team: Dr Javier Martinez and Ms Chelsea Stefanska

### 3. National Advisory Team on the Obesity Strategy

Dr Tshimi Lynn Moeng-Mahlangu (NDoH)  
Dr Yogan Pillay (CHAI)  
Dr Mercy Chikoko (FAO)  
Mr Gilbert Tshitauzi (UNICEF)  
Dr Kibachio Joseph Mwangi (WHO)  
Ms Ann Behr (NDoH)  
Mr Itumeleng Setlhare (NDoH)  
Ms Zandile Maluleke (NDoH)  
Ms Modjadji Ntsoane (NDoH)  
Ms Livhuwani Dali (NDoH)  
Ms Anna Godzwana (NDoH)

4. **Relevant DoH programmes and technical experts at national, provincial and district levels**

5. **Other government departments**

Department of Basic Education  
Department of Communications and Digital Technologies  
Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation  
Department of Public Service and Administration  
Department of Sport, Arts and Culture  
Treasury

6. **Persons, organisations and institutions from different sectors who participated in engagement sessions to review and update the Obesity Strategy**

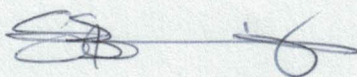
7. **Costing and Socio-economic impact assessment**

MRC/Wits Centre for Health Economics and Decision Science: PRICELESS SA. School of Public Health. University of Witwatersrand

8. **Funder**

The Better Health Programme SA (BHPSA) which is funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) through the British High Commission in Pretoria and managed by Mott MacDonald. BHPSA funded the process to review and update the Strategy, costing of the strategy, development of the SBCC components to support the Strategy as well as hosting engagement sessions with stakeholders.

The strategy is a multi-faceted and multi-sectoral document, which requires a multi-sectoral collaboration. Therefore, the joint collaboration by all stakeholders in implementing this Strategy to reduce the burden of obesity in the country is greatly appreciated.



**Dr S S S Buthelezi**

Director-General: Health

Date: 21/05/2023

## FOREWORD

---

It is well established that overweight and obesity are serious health problems in South Africa that significantly contributes to non-communicable diseases as well as being associated with a higher risk of death and disability from these diseases. The Department in 2022 launched the *National Strategic Plan on the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases, 2022 – 2027* to respond as a matter of urgency toward the prevention and control of NCDs, risk factors and mental health conditions.

The cost and extent of obesity and overweight in South Africa is unsustainable and does not contribute towards the Department of Health's vision of a "long and healthy life for all South Africans". The updated *Strategy for the Prevention and Management of Obesity in South Africa, 2023 – 2028*, therefore is timeous to contribute to the reduction of obesity and consequently NCDs.

The review process of the 2015- 2020 Strategy for the Prevention and Management of Obesity in South Africa highlighted successes such as early childhood campaigns and the health promotion levy of sugar-sweetened beverages.

The challenges and recommendations highlighted during the review of the 2015 – 2020 strategy were taken into account in updating this strategy which focuses at creating an enabling environment for healthy food choices and physical activity opportunities. This strategy requires a multifaceted, multisectoral approach to prevent and manage obesity in the country.

The updated strategy will build on the gains made in the last few years in relation to the health promotion levy on sugar-sweetened beverages, the salt reduction regulations and the work that is currently underway on front-of-pack labels to enable consumers to make informed decisions. These interventions are in line with the WHO's "*Tackling NCDs: 'best buys' and other recommended interventions for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases*" and were generated through the collaboration with research institutions and other stakeholders. It is only through the collaboration of stakeholders that the vision of the strategy: "*All South Africans lead a healthy lifestyle and maintain a healthy weight*" can be realised.



**Dr M J Phaahla, MP**  
Minister of Health

Date: 14/04/2023