Cancer Research UK will launch a national campaign in February 2018 aimed at raising awareness of the link between obesity and cancer.

**WHY ARE YOU RUNNING THIS CAMPAIGN?**

Cancer Research UK is committed to beating cancer. Every year, 4 in 10 cancer cases in the UK could be prevented. Overweight and obesity is the second biggest preventable cause of cancer in the UK after smoking. It is estimated that 5% of cancer cases are linked to excess bodyweight in the UK per year yet only 15% of people are aware of this link.

Feedback during testing of the campaign advertising highlighted that people felt it was Cancer Research UK’s responsibility to communicate this important message and it was something the public should be made more aware of.

**WHAT IS THE AIM OF THIS CAMPAIGN?**

We want to raise the awareness of the link between obesity and cancer and keep the issue top of mind publicly and politically. We understand that making healthy choices in the world we live in is not easy so one of our main goals is to lobby the government and food industry to make changes so it’s easier for everyone to live a healthy life. Research has shown that raising public awareness of an issue creates a favourable environment for policy change, which in turn can lead to effective public health policy and behaviour change. For some people increased awareness may also trigger them to make healthier choices, however changing behaviour is not the primary aim of this campaign.

We tested the campaign by running a regional pilot in the West Midlands in October 2016 and saw that it works, successfully increasing awareness of the link by 22% points.

**HOW DOES OBESITY CAUSE CANCER?**

Scientists around the world and organisations such as the World Health Organization understand 3 key ways in which excess weight can lead to cancer. Extra body fat can cause greater levels of growth hormones, sex hormones and inflammation in the body. All these factors can lead to greater cell division, increasing the chance of cancer cells being produced.
OBESITY AWARENESS CAMPAIGN
UK-WIDE
Monday 25th February – Sunday 25th March

ARE THERE ANY RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH THE CAMPAIGN?

Weight is a very personal and complex issue, so talking about weight can make people feel lots of different things. The aim of the campaign is to give people evidenced based facts to help them understand the impact of excess weight on cancer risk. Some people could interpret the campaign as “fat shaming” but we have information ready to help you explain the campaign and answer questions about concerns like this.

WHAT IS CANCER RESEARCH UK DOING TO HELP TACKLE OBESITY?

We fund research to help improve the evidence base about obesity and cancer for policymakers, as well as looking at how we can use behavioural interventions to help people live more healthily. We lobby the government to introduce policy measures to address the issue. We also go out and speak to the public in various ways through community engagement.

1 Parkin, Boyd, Walker, BJC, 2011
2 CRUK Cancer Awareness Measure, 2017
3 CRUK qualitative research study, Kindling, 2016
5 CRUK research study, Morar, 2016

Cancer Research UK is a Registered Charity in England and Wales (1089464), Scotland (SC041666) and the Isle of Man (1103).