

# The sweet taste of ill-health

*BHA trustee Francis Treuherz looks at how homeopathy can help those battling the bulge and their craving for sugar*

**A**s I write this article in the middle of January, every newspaper and magazine seems full of concern about our weight: our babies' weight, our children's weight and even more so, the weight of adults. The message is clear: we are too heavy and too large.

According to a study published in *The Lancet* medical journal in 2014, the UK has the highest levels of overweight people anywhere in Western Europe except for Iceland and Malta. Researchers found that 67% of men and 57% of women in the UK are either overweight or obese. Just as alarming is the number of children who are overweight – 26% of boys and 29% of girls. These figures have resulted in members of the medical profession and the media referring to this weighty national problem as the “obesity epidemic”.

Obesity is defined as anyone with a body mass index (BMI) of 30 or above, while people who are overweight have a BMI of over 25. This problem affects people of all ages and social backgrounds and increases the risk of diabetes, heart disease and some cancers, which inevitably leads to more strain on NHS resources. Consequently, our weight has become of great interest to politicians who echo the advice of doctors in their call for the British population to eat less sugar and saturated fats, take more exercise and lose those excess pounds. This is not always as easy as it sounds, as many people find dieting and strenuous exercise a nightmare.

Furthermore, large numbers of British people do appear to have developed quite a substantial appetite for sugar, consuming ever increasing quantities of sweet foods and drinks. A high sugar diet is contributing to the obesity epidemic and the resulting health problems of Type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome and fatty liver. So grave are the health consequences for people who over indulge their sweet tooth, some health experts and nutritionists view sugar as “the new tobacco”, and are call-

ing on the government to introduce punitive taxation on foods with a high sugar content.

## Sugar and children

The campaign group Action on Sugar says sugar is a major cause of obesity and has set out to inform the public of the harmful effects that a high sugar



Gymnema sylvestre

Photo: Vinayaji/Mikimedia

intake can have on their health. The group also stresses the importance of protecting children from this “public health hazard” and has called for the food industry to reduce the amount of sugar that it is adding to children's foods and drinks, and to stop targeting children with massive advertising for sweetened snacks and soft drinks.

Most adults' love of sweet foods and drinks stems from childhood, with confectionery of all kinds and highly sweetened juices and colas featuring at the top of many a child's list of favourite things to eat and drink. But when you consider there is the equivalent of seven

cubes of sugar in a can of cola, the importance of educating children away from a high-sugar diet becomes apparent. However, the addictive nature of sugar makes it difficult for many adults to change their eating habits, so it is hardly surprising that children find adopting and keeping to a more healthy diet extremely challenging.

Nevertheless, in my experience children can be weaned away from sweet foods and drinks with the help of homeopathy. I recall one child who was referred to me because she had been labelled hyperactive. She was said to be capricious and whining, but also speedy. This I recognised as the behaviour of a child who was being fed too much sugar and recalled the rubrics (symptoms) recorded by the prominent English classical homeopath John H Clarke in relation to children and the homeopathic medicine *Saccharum officinale*.

*The children are dainty and capricious, care nothing for substantial food, but want little “nicknacks”; always cross and whining, and, if old enough, are insolent and do not care to occupy themselves in any way. Everything too much trouble.*

*Saccharum officinale* is the botanical name for sugarcane and I prescribed a 1m potency to be taken in infrequent doses. Over a two-month period the child calmed down and willingly consumed fewer sweets.

## A serious craving

So can homeopathy help adults tackle their expanding waistlines and addictions to sweet sugary foods? In answer to this question I would like to share another case history.

A typical unwitting victim of “sugar poisoning” was a mature male who consulted his GP with what appeared to be inexplicable symptoms of recurrent weakness. After some tests the GP informed him that he had a metabolic syndrome and Type 2 diabetes. The patient had strong views about con-