# Prue Leith raises alarm over childhood obesity rates in the UK



Dame Prue Leith, a prominent judge on "The Great British Bake Off," has voiced her concerns regarding the rising rates of childhood obesity in the UK, attributing the problem to the increasing reliance on processed foods and inappropriate portion sizes. Speaking to The Sun, Leith described food portion sizes as "ridiculous" and underscored the necessity of educating children about healthy eating habits through cooking.

At 85 years old, Leith has been an advocate for promoting healthier food choices for over six decades. She stated, "The obesity rates in children are alarming and getting worse with almost a third regarded as obese or overweight," sharing her belief that the key to reversing this trend lies in instilling a love for nutritious food in children. "I’ve been saying for 60 years that we start addressing this by teaching children to love healthy food – and the way to do this is to teach them how to cook," she continued.

Recent statistics from the NHS reveal that, in 2024, 15 per cent of children aged between two and ten in England were classed as obese, with a higher statistic of 19 per cent among those aged between eleven and fifteen. The issue extends to adults too; 64 per cent of them were reported as being overweight or obese in 2022, a group that includes 29 per cent classified as obese, with men's rates slightly higher at 67 per cent compared to women's at 61 per cent.

Leith compared the UK’s situation with that of Japan, a country known for its low childhood obesity rates. According to data from the World Obesity Federation, only 1.6 per cent of girls and 6.2 per cent of boys in Japan are classified as obese. She suggested that Japan's culture around meal preparation and consumption is an effective model. "Look at Japan. Obviously, they’re doing something we’re not," remarked Leith. She elaborated that children in Japanese schools are provided a healthy, home-cooked meal every day and that the use of processed foods is strictly prohibited in school kitchens.

Critically assessing the UK government's approach, Leith argued that officials often prioritise short-term financial gains from taxes on sugary and fast foods, failing to consider the long-term benefits of fostering healthier eating habits. She expressed a desire for more awareness around the importance of portion sizes, stating, "I wish people would eat less," and pointed out that she believes excessive eating may be linked to emotional factors, saying, "When we’re not happy, we comfort eat. It’s true that when you’re miserable, you go straight to the fridge or want chocolate."

Furthermore, the NHS has indicated that the prevalence of obesity is notably higher among individuals living in the most deprived areas. This concern is compounded by the financial strain on health services, with the NHS reportedly spending £6.5 billion annually on treating health conditions related to obesity. Leith's comments highlight the complexity of the issue, intertwining public health, social behaviour, and cultural practices in the ongoing conversation surrounding childhood obesity in the UK.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/prue-leith-bake-off-husband-cotswold-kitchen-b2732184.html> - The article corroborates Prue Leith's concerns about food portion sizes and childhood obesity, citing statistics highlighting the issue in the UK and contrasting it with Japan's low obesity rates.
2. <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/prue-leith-bake-off-husband-cotswold-kitchen-b2732184.html> - It supports Leith's views on the role of processed foods in rising obesity, emphasizing the need for healthy eating education.
3. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/food-and-drink/features/prue-leith-ultra-processed-foods/> - This article supports Leith's stance on ultra-processed foods and their contribution to obesity, highlighting the need for healthier school meals.
4. <https://www.nhs.uk/news/obesity/child-obesity-figures-show-rise> - The article from the NHS provides data on obesity rates among children and adults, backing up Leith's statements on rising obesity figures.
5. <https://worldobesity.org/> - This resource from the World Obesity Federation supports statistics about obesity rates in Japan, which Leith uses as an example of successful dietary practices.
6. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/child-obesity-prevalence> - This official UK government publication provides statistics on child obesity, supporting Leith's claims about its prevalence in England across different age groups.
7. <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/prue-leith-bake-off-husband-cotswold-kitchen-b2732184.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data