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Global Health and Fitness Leaders Call for Physical Activity and Nutrition to Be Central to Obesity Medication Rollout

Joint statement from the World Obesity Federation, the Health & Fitness Association, AUSactive, Exercise New Zealand, Fitness Industry Council of Canada, and ukactive outlines a global framework for integrating prevention, treatment, and long-term health outcomes

LONDON—March 31, 2026—The World Obesity Federation, the Health & Fitness Association, AUSactive, Exercise New Zealand, Fitness Industry Council of Canada, and ukactive today released a joint position statement calling on governments, health systems, and international institutions to ensure that as obesity medications—including GLP-1 therapies—are scaled globally, they are supported by subsidized, integrated lifestyle interventions, with physical activity and nutrition embedded as essential elements of care.

With nearly three billion adults worldwide who are overweight or living with obesity—a figure projected to rise to four billion by 2035—the organizations emphasize that while obesity medications represent a significant clinical advancement, they must be deployed within comprehensive, integrated care models that prioritize long-term health outcomes. They are not a standalone solution.

The joint statement warns that reliance on medication alone may lead to poor long-term outcomes, including loss of muscle mass, diminished functional capacity, and widening health inequalities if access to supportive services is limited. Instead, the organizations call for a “wraparound” approach that combines pharmacological treatment with sustained investment in physical activity, nutrition, and supportive environments.

“Obesity is a complex, chronic disease that requires a comprehensive and coordinated response,” the organizations state. “Medications can play an important role, but they are not a standalone solution. Their success will depend on whether they are integrated into systems that support prevention, long-term behaviour change, and overall well-being.”

The statement outlines key actions for global policymakers and health system leaders, including:

- Embedding obesity medications within integrated care models that include funded access to physical activity and nutrition support
- Protecting and expanding investment in prevention infrastructure and community-based programs
- Ensuring equitable access to both treatment and supportive services
- Measuring outcomes beyond weight, including functional health and long-term maintenance
- Aligning health and economic policy to recognize the value of prevention

Leadership Quotes

Johanna Ralston, CEO, World Obesity Federation:

"GLP-1 therapies are an important advance in obesity care, but they cannot succeed in isolation. People with obesity demand and deserve access to good nutrition and physical activity support and advice, to support lasting rather than short-term health improvements. Governments must ensure these treatments are embedded within comprehensive, person-centred systems of care."

Liz Clark, President and CEO, Health & Fitness Association:

"The emergence of effective obesity medications marks a pivotal moment in global health, but it also presents a critical choice. We can treat obesity as a short-term clinical intervention, or we can build systems that deliver lasting health outcomes. Physical activity and nutrition are not optional add-ons; they are foundational to safety, effectiveness, and long-term success. This is an opportunity to properly position our sector as an essential partner in prevention and care while ensuring individuals retain the freedom to engage in physical activity in the environments where they feel most comfortable."

Ken Griffin, CEO, AUSactive:

"New obesity medications are an active challenge to health systems. If wraparound supports are provided, these medications can deliver long-term health benefits. Governments must now decide whether they treat obesity in the short-term or invest to deliver enduring health outcomes. Physical activity and nutrition supports are essential, not optional, and the exercise and active health sector is ready to play its role as an essential partner to safely improve population health."

Richard Beddie, CEO, Exercise New Zealand:

"It's clear GLP-1 therapies can be a significant tool in addressing obesity. However, if it's not paired with strength training and other lifestyle changes the result will be increased long-term health costs for the health system and worse health outcomes for individuals. We have the opportunity to build a safe and effective intervention, but it needs to be holistic."

Zach Weston, Executive Director, Fitness Industry Council of Canada:

"As we navigate this new era of clinical obesity treatments, we must recognize that medication is only one piece of the puzzle. For these therapies to deliver true, sustainable health outcomes, they must be anchored by the professional guidance and supportive environments found in our fitness centres. Our facilities are more than just places to exercise; they are essential community hubs for maintaining the muscle mass and functional capacity that are often at risk during rapid weight loss. By integrating fitness infrastructure into the global rollout of these medications, we ensure that patients aren't just losing weight, but are gaining the strength and long-term vitality necessary for a healthier life."



Huw Edwards, CEO, ukactive:

“The global rise of obesity medications must not be viewed as a substitute for physical activity and nutrition when in fact it heightens the need for these vital elements. Research shows the risks of relying solely on weight-loss drugs and the critical need for physical activity and nutrition to form part of every treatment programme. This represents a huge opportunity in the UK and globally for our political leaders to integrate physical activity, nutrition and medication to combat obesity and the harm it causes. We have the infrastructure of gyms, swimming pools, leisure centres and other fitness services in every community, ready to support GLP-1 patients during and after treatment.”

A Global Call to Action

As global leaders representing the health and fitness sector and the obesity community, the undersigned organizations and the World Obesity Federation commit to advancing evidence-based, integrated approaches that combine medication with physical activity and nutrition support. Together, we will work with governments and key stakeholders to strengthen policies, systems, and outcomes that improve population health.

The organizations underscore that investment in physical activity and nutrition benefits not only individuals receiving obesity treatment, but entire populations—making it central to both prevention and long-term health system sustainability.

Read the full joint position statement here: [\[attached to email\]](#)

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About the Organizations

World Obesity Federation

The World Obesity Federation (World Obesity) is the only global organisation focused exclusively on obesity.

[World Obesity](#) represents stakeholders in high-, medium- and low-income countries, including experts, advocates, patients and practitioners. It is a lead partner to global agencies on obesity, including the World Health Organization (WHO) – with which it has formal consultative status. The World Obesity Federation takes a holistic view of obesity from cause and prevention to treatment.



World Obesity Federation strongly encourages journalists and editors to use [people-first language](#) and respectful images when reporting on obesity and overweight.

Access to images:

The World Obesity Federation [Image Bank](#) is a gallery of free-to-use images that are accurate, non-biased and respectful.

Health & Fitness Association

The Health & Fitness Association (formerly IHRSA), a global community of industry leaders, is the only worldwide trade association providing a unified voice for the community of leaders who operate health and fitness facilities, offer professional guidance on physical activity, and provide the tools and equipment to do so to the millions of fitness facility members who understand that exercise improves their physical and mental health. Through advocacy, education, and research, the association speaks to opportunities, challenges, and changes that are moving the industry into a new era.

Founded in 1981, the association publishes a monthly magazine, [Health & Fitness Business](#), and operates [The HFA Show](#), the [HFA European Congress](#), and the Fly-In and Advocacy Summit. The association also partners on events around the world, including [Fitness Brasil](#), [ChinaFit](#), [MEFIT Summit](#) and [Wellness & Fitness LATAM](#). Follow the Health & Fitness Association on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), [X](#) and [YouTube](#).

AUSactive

AUSactive is Australia's peak body for the exercise and active health sector, and our goal is to activate Australians to move more. We do this through providing services, education and advocacy for exercise professionals, businesses and students. Our programs are designed to grow skills, businesses, and careers. We work with all stakeholders across the sector, driving the development of best practice, industry standards and continuing education to support our members so they are ready for emerging opportunities and rewarding careers. www.ausactive.org.au

Exercise New Zealand

Exercise New Zealand is the peak body representing the exercise industry in Aotearoa / New Zealand, who collectively bring the benefits of exercise to over half a million members, and contribute over \$500 million to the NZ economy. We are committed to supporting the industry through advocacy, resources, standards and education.

Fitness Industry Council of Canada

The Fitness Industry Council of Canada (FIC) is the non-profit trade association representing over 7,000 fitness facilities across Canada. As the unified voice of the Canadian fitness industry, FIC advocates for policies that promote physical activity and support the commercial viability of fitness providers. Our mission is to work with provincial and federal governments to improve the health of all Canadians by making fitness more accessible, professionalized, and integrated into the national physical activity and healthcare strategy.

ukactive

ukactive is the UK's trade body for the physical activity sector, bringing together more than 3,000 member organisations and partners in our shared ambition to get More People, More Active, More Often. From gyms, leisure centres, studios, sports bodies and other activity providers, to major health bodies, consumer brands, tech firms and equipment manufacturers, our community collaborates across the private, public and third sectors. ukactive facilitates high-impact partnerships, conceives and drives breakthrough campaigns, conducts critical research and lobbies the Government to recognise the power of the physical activity sector to address today's biggest issues – including reducing the burden on the NHS and social care, improving workforce health to grow the economy, revitalising our high streets, reducing crime, and tackling loneliness.