

**Forum:** World Health Assembly (WHA)

**Issue:** Combating the global obesity epidemic through innovation.

**Student Officer:** Pratham Khare

**Position:** Head Chair of the World Health Assembly

---

## Introduction

The abnormal or excessive accumulation of fat that poses a health threat is what is meant to be referred to as obesity and overweight. Most of the time, eating too much and not moving enough leads to obesity. If an individual were to consume a lot of energy, especially from fat and sugar, but doesn't burn it off through exercise and other physical activities, the body will store a lot of the extra energy as fat. Obesity is a problem that is getting worse because people in today's society eat a lot of cheap, high-calorie food and spend a lot of time sitting down, at desks, on couches, or in cars.

The simple weight-to-height index known as the body mass index, or BMI, is frequently used to classify adults as overweight or obese. A BMI of more than 25 is considered overweight, and a BMI of more than 30 is obese. According to the global burden of disease, the problem has reached epidemic proportions.

Obesity is a multifaceted, relapsing disease brought on by a number of factors, including genetic susceptibility, a diet high in energy, a lack of physical activity, and stress. Numerous other noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), including cancer, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease, are also linked to obesity. Over 4.7 million people worldwide die each year from NCDs caused by obesity, half of whom are under the age of 70. Obesity is unfortunately on the rise; Every nation on the planet saw an increase in obesity rates between 1975 and 2016.

## Timeline

The obesity epidemic is a complex and ongoing issue with a long history.

- 1950s-1960s: The rise of fast food and processed food, combined with increased sedentary lifestyles, begins to contribute to a gradual increase in obesity rates.
- 1980s: The term "obesity epidemic" is first used to describe the growing problem of excessive weight gain.
- 1990s: The number of overweight and obese people in the United States begins to rise rapidly, and similar trends are observed in many other countries.
- 1998: The first laparoscopic gastric bypass surgery is performed, offering a new surgical option for people with severe obesity.
- 2000: The World Health Organization (WHO) officially recognizes obesity as a global epidemic.
- 2005: The first weight loss drug, orlistat (Xenical), is approved for over-the-counter use in the United States.
- 2010: The number of adults with obesity surpasses the number of adults with underweight globally, marking a major shift in the global burden of malnutrition.
- 2012: The American Medical Association recognizes obesity as a disease, a decision that has major implications for insurance coverage and medical treatment of the condition.
- 2020: The COVID-19 pandemic leads to a surge in food insecurity and weight gain for many people, adding to the already complex problem of obesity.

This timeline highlights some of the major events and developments related to the obesity epidemic, but it is by no means exhaustive. The issue of obesity continues to evolve and remains a major public health challenge in many countries.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Obesity

The state or condition of being very fat or overweight.

### BMI – Body Mass Index

Body mass index is a value derived from the mass and height of a person.

### Epidemic

A widespread occurrence of an infectious disease in a community at a particular time.

### Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs)

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), also known as chronic diseases, are not passed from person to person. Tend to be of long duration and are the result of a combination of genetic, physiological, environmental and behavioral factors.

## Key Issues

Obesity, which is at the opposite end of the malnutrition scale, is one of the public health issues that is currently the most prominently visible but also the most neglected. A paradoxically growing global epidemic of overweight and obesity, known as "globesity," is taking over many parts of the world alongside malnutrition. Millions of people will suffer from a wide range of serious health conditions if nothing is done right away.

Obesity is a complicated condition that affects virtually all age and socioeconomic groups and threatens to overwhelm both developed and developing nations. It has serious social and psychological ramifications. There were an estimated 200 million obese adults and another 18 million overweight children under the age of five worldwide in 1995. Over 300 million adults were overweight as of the year 2000. The obesity epidemic is not limited to industrialized societies, contrary to conventional wisdom; Over 115 million people in developing nations are thought to have issues related to obesity.

In general, women have higher rates of obesity than men, despite the fact that men may have higher rates of obesity. Obesity puts both of them at a significant risk of serious noncommunicable diet-related diseases like diabetes, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, stroke, and some types of cancer. It has negative effects on one's health, including an increased chance of dying too soon and serious, long-term conditions that lower one's quality of life.

## Major Parties Involved and Their Views

### **Kuwait**

Obesity is a growing concern in Kuwait. According to recent studies, the rate of obesity in Kuwait is among the highest in the world, with more than 60% of the adult population considered to be overweight or obese. The primary causes of obesity in Kuwait include a sedentary lifestyle, high caloric diets, and the increasing availability of unhealthy food options. Additionally, cultural norms around food consumption, such as the belief that hospitality is demonstrated through large and frequent meals, also contribute to the problem.

The consequences of obesity in Kuwait include an increased risk of chronic health conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and certain types of cancer. The high prevalence of obesity also places a significant burden on the country's healthcare system. In response to this growing problem, the Kuwaiti government has taken steps to promote healthy lifestyles and increase awareness about the dangers of obesity. This has included initiatives such as promoting physical activity and healthier food options, as well as educational programs aimed at reducing unhealthy eating habits.

It is important for individuals to take responsibility for their own health by adopting healthy lifestyle habits, including regular exercise and a balanced diet. Additionally, healthcare

providers and policymakers in Kuwait can continue to work towards creating a supportive environment that encourages healthy behaviors and helps prevent obesity.

## United States of America

The obesity epidemic persists in the United States despite growing awareness of the issue, and obesity rates are rising globally. In the United States, approximately 34% of adults and 15–20% of children and adolescents are obese, according to the most recent estimates. Every segment of the American population is affected by obesity. Obesity raises the risk of a wide range of long-term conditions in both children and adults. Obesity spread slowly over time, perhaps as a result of a small but persistent positive energy balance. Although significant public health efforts are being made to combat obesity, there is currently no conclusive evidence of their success. Obesity is likely to be one of the most challenging public health issues our society has faced because of its complexity.

People of color and those with low incomes suffer more from obesity than the general population. The cheapest foods are those with a lot of fat and sugar. Therefore, eating a diet high in fat and sugar is the best way to get the most calories for the least amount of money. This shows how biology and economics work together to support the obesity epidemic. In addition, minority and low-income individuals may engage in less physical activity than other segments of the population, in low-income populations, issues with neighborhood safety may prevent children from playing outside. These foods, which contribute to overeating and for which we have a high biological preference (i.e., foods high in sugar and high in energy density), are currently the cheapest and most accessible. People with more financial resources are better able to deal with these situations and, as a result, are more physically active and less likely to be obese than people with fewer resources.

## United Kingdom

In the UK, men have higher obesity rates. Compared to 60% of women, 68% of men are overweight or obese. In addition, 29% of men and 27% of women are thought to be obese. In addition, they discovered that obesity rates rose with age, peaking somewhere in the 65 to 74 year old age range. In recent years, these rates have significantly increased. Europe's obesity rates could rise to as high as 60%, according to experts. A citizen's life expectancy can be cut by three years if you have moderate obesity, but it can be cut by as much as ten years if you have severe obesity.

According to the most recent National Child Measurement Program (NCMP), 22.6% of children between the ages of 4 and 5 and 34.3% of children between the ages of 10 and 11 were obese. Additionally, they discovered that, in comparison to the UK's least deprived regions, deprived areas had a higher prevalence of childhood obesity. These rates are caused by a number of things. Unhealthy eating is the primary factor. Children of all ages exceeded the daily allowances for sugar and saturated fat in the most recent National Diet and Nutrition Survey, but they did not meet the recommendations for more beneficial nutrients like fiber.

### Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

#### Early Care and Education

Child care and early education facilities' environments can have a direct impact on children's diets and physical activity levels, laying the groundwork for healthy lifestyle choices later in life.

## Healthy Food Environments

Healthy food environments in communities can be made possible by a wide range of policies and programs. Incentives for supermarkets or farmers markets to open in underserved areas, nutrition and calorie counts on menus of fast food and restaurants, and nutrition standards for childcare facilities, schools, hospitals, and workplaces are among these.

## Physical Activity – Community Strategies

There are many different ways to get more people in the community moving around. Point-of-decision prompts that encourage using paths or trails, individually tailored health behavior change programs, enhanced school-based physical education, and large-scale media campaigns that deliver messages via television, radio, newspaper, and social media are examples of these strategies. They might also include efforts to make more places where people can be active, like making walking trails and making school buildings open to the public. Community design modifications may be involved in some strategies.

## Medications

There are several medications that are approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for the treatment of obesity. These medications can be used in combination with diet and exercise to help individuals achieve and maintain weight loss.

1. Orlistat: This medication works by blocking the absorption of fat in the digestive system, leading to reduced calorie intake.
2. Liraglutide: This medication is a glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) receptor agonist that helps regulate appetite and food intake by increasing feelings of fullness.

3. Phentermine-Topiramate: This combination medication works by suppressing appetite and increasing feelings of fullness.
4. Bupropion-Naltrexone: This combination medication works by suppressing appetite and increasing feelings of fullness, and also by blocking the effects of opioids in the brain that can trigger overeating.
5. Lorcaserin: This medication works by activating serotonin receptors in the brain, which helps to regulate appetite and food intake.

It's important to note that these medications are not a quick fix for obesity, and they should always be used in combination with lifestyle changes, such as a healthy diet and regular exercise. In addition, the use of weight loss medications should always be monitored by a healthcare provider to ensure their safety and efficacy.

It's also worth noting that not all individuals are suitable candidates for weight loss medications. For example, individuals with certain medical conditions, such as heart disease or high blood pressure, may not be able to use certain medications. Your healthcare provider will be able to advise you on the most appropriate treatment option for your individual needs and circumstances.

## **Possible Solutions**

### **Weight Management Programs**

A formal weight-management program may be beneficial for some people. In a weight-management program, trained specialists will create a comprehensive plan just for the individual and assist them in sticking to it. Plans include a diet low in calories, more exercise, and ways to help them change their habits and keep them. The individual can work with the experts face-to-face in individual or group sessions on-site. In order to support the plan, the experts may keep in touch with them on a regular basis via phone or



an online portal. They may be able to track how well they're individual are sticking to there plan by using devices like accelerometers, pedometers, and smartphones.

## Weight Loss Devices

If the individual hasn't been able to lose weight or keep from gaining it back with other treatments, their doctor may look into weight-loss devices. Researchers lack long-term data on the safety and efficacy of weight loss devices due to their recent approval. Some of theses devices include:

- **Electrical Simulation System:** With laparoscopic surgery, the electrical stimulation system makes use of a device inserted into the subject's abdomen. The device prevents nerve communication between the subject's brain and stomach.
- **Gastric Balloon System:** A doctor uses a mouth-inserted tube to insert one or two gastric balloons into the patients stomach for the gastric balloon system. The surgeon fills the balloons with salt water once they are in your stomach to make them take up more space and make you feel fuller
- **Gastric Emptying System:** After a meal, a gastric emptying system uses a pump to remove some of the food from the individual's stomach. A tube that connects the stomach to the outside of the abdomen is included in the device. The individual uses the pump to empty the stomach of food through the tube into the toilet about 20 to 30 minutes after eating.

## Bariatric Surgery

Bariatric surgery is a group of procedures that alter the subject's digestive system to help them lose weight. If the subject has extreme obesity and haven't been able to lose enough

weight to improve their health or keep from gaining back the weight they lost with other treatments, bariatric surgery might be an option for them. If the subject has a serious health issue related to obesity, such as type 2 diabetes or sleep apnea, bariatric surgery may also be an option at lower levels of obesity. Many of the medical conditions linked to obesity can be improved through bariatric surgery, particularly type 2 diabetes.

## **Bibliography**

1. [https://www.who.int/health-topics/obesity#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/obesity#tab=tab_1)
2. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/obesity-and-overweight>
3. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/obesity/causes/>
4. <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/nutritional/obesity>
5. <http://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/wof-files/Economic-impact-overweight-obesity-in-countries-final.pdf>
6. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Body\\_mass\\_index](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Body_mass_index)
7. Oxford Dictionary of English
8. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/noncommunicable-diseases>
9. <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/press-releases/worldwide-obesity/>
10. <https://thedailyviz.com/2011/09/28/how-the-american-diet-has-changed-since-1980/>
11. <https://www.who.int/activities/controlling-the-global-obesity-epidemic>
12. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3228640/>
13. <https://www.healthexpress.co.uk/obesity-statistics-uk>

14. <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/weight-management/adult-overweight-obesity/treatment>