

OBESITY FACT SHEET

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WHAT IS OBESITY?

Obesity is defined by the World Health Organisation as 'abnormal or excessive fat accumulation that presents a risk to health'. It is most commonly measured by BMI, though there are other methods such as waist and height ratios, that taken with BMI, can be more accurate.

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OBESITY IS A RISK FACTOR

People living with obesity are at a greater risk from other chronic diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease and certain cancers. Obesity is also a risk factor for complications of Covid-19.

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WEIGHT STIGMA IS DANGEROUS

In many countries, people living with obesity are regularly blamed for their disease. Weight stigma reinforces assumptions that obesity is a person's individual responsibility. It can damage mental and physical wellbeing and may prevent people from seeking necessary medical care. While stigma differs in different parts of the world, one thing is clear: experiencing systemic bias does not help people to adopt healthier lifestyles. In fact, it can make it harder. Learn more about the impact of stigma.

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OBESITY IS A DISEASE

It is caused by a variety of factors, including biology, mental health, genetic risk, environment, healthcare access, and access to ultra-processed food. It is not due to lack of willpower.

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'EAT LESS, MOVE MORE' DOES NOT "FIX" OBESITY

'Eating less, moving more' implies that weight loss is just about diet and exercise, ignoring other drivers of obesity. Although physical exercise plays an important role in overall health and can be used in the context of comprehensive weight management interventions and prevention strategies, exercise alone is not an effective obesity treatment.



Obesity is a disease. Its medical consequences will cost over \$1 trillion by 2025. Improved investment in treatment and prevention is needed to reduce these costs.



People living with obesity are twice as likely to be hospitalized if tested positive for Covid-19.

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INDIVIDUALS ARE NOT TO BLAME FOR THEIR OBESITY

Obesity is often driven by forces outside of a person's control. Biological and genetic factors put some of us at greater risk. Our physical and social environments impact on our ability to live healthy lives and expose us to unhealthy foods that are engineered to make us eat more. Obesity is therefore the result of complex biological, genetic and environmental factors.

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OBESITY IS NO LONGER JUST A DISEASE OF RICH COUNTRIES

Obesity is now rising the fastest in lower and middle-income countries. Many are simultaneously tackling overweight/obesity and under-nutrition. Obesity is especially prevalent in poorer and more vulnerable communities.

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OBESITY IS NOT JUST ABOUT WEIGHT

Weight is one indicator of obesity, but treating obesity is about improving overall health, not just about losing weight. It is possible for a person with a higher BMI to be managing their disease and living at a 'healthy weight'.

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CHILDHOOD OBESITY CAN AND MUST BE PREVENTED AND TREATED

Childhood obesity has nearly doubled every 10 years. It can profoundly affect children's physical health, social, and emotional well-being, and self-esteem. It is associated with poor academic performance and a lower quality of life. It is often carried through to adulthood, so prevention and treatment is vital to stopping a global rise in obesity. Education is needed to support appropriate nutrition for children.



Our contacts

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“World Obesity Day takes place annually on March 4th. Our aim is to increase awareness, encourage advocacy, improve policies and share experiences around obesity”

250

MILLION

The number of children living with obesity is predicted to increase by 60% worldwide over the next decade, reaching 250 million by 2030.

800

MILLION

800 million people around the world are affected by obesity.