

The Obesity Epidemic

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Executive Summary

This article addresses the issues and dangers of the obesity epidemic in society. Today, considering the severe and permanent effects of obesity, decreasing this trend is a public obligation. Excessive consumption of fast food and insufficient physical activity among individuals are believed to be the major factors contributing to this condition. People generally suffer barriers to regulating these two impacts, such as lack of time, lack of energy, and environmental effects. However, individuals may help minimize the growing obesity epidemic by modifying their daily diet as well as implementing basic exercise strategies. Furthermore, it is true that individuals play a major part in controlling this disease, but the responsibility of governments in establishing and leading people in the right direction for this process should not be ignored. The practical solutions proposed conclude that by raising public awareness of the irreversible effects of this epidemic and encouraging public participation between individuals and governments, solving current problems is not out of reach, and nations can see a significant improvement in the current situation.

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1.Introduction

Nowadays, the obesity epidemic has been involved in numerous controversies. Some individuals believe that controlling fast-food consumption is the crucial factor, while others claim that physical inactivity should be mentioned. To the extent that it is known, there was no obesity problem during the early stages of human life on Earth, when humans hunted and gathered. Today's advancements in agriculture, food processing, marketing, and rural and urban planning, combined with sedentary lifestyles, have resulted in an obese world. However, it is true that today the world is being severely impacted by this epidemic, but overcoming the obstacles involved is not intractable and will need the entire collaboration of individuals and governments.

2.1 Prevalence of fast food consumption

One of the primary causes of obesity is the rising prevalence of fast food consumption. Today's advancements in agriculture, food processing, marketing, and rural and urban planning, combined with sedentary lifestyles, have resulted in an obese world. People are spending 45 percent of their income on food in restaurants, according to the Food Institute's analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics data (Butler, 2018). Moreover, obese individuals, in comparison to those who maintain a healthy weight, are at an increased risk of suffering from a number of serious and severe diseases. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), some of the more significant effects of obesity on an individual's health are high blood pressure, low quality of life, body pain, stroke, heart disease, breathing problems, type 2 diabetes, anxiety, and many types of cancer (CDC, 2021). Apart from that, a large number of fast foods, including beverages and side dishes, have a high level of carbohydrates and a low level of fiber. Hence, as Butler (2018) has stated, when carbohydrates are released into the human bloodstream as glucose when these meals are broken down by their digestive system, as a result, their blood sugar level rises. Butler (2018) believes that insulin circulates sugar throughout the body, transferring it to cells that require it for energy, restoring normal blood sugar levels when sugar is utilized or stored by the body. Thus, as long as the individual's body carefully manages this blood sugar process and their organs remain healthy, their organs can adequately control their glucose levels. However, consuming a high carbohydrate diet on a regular basis may result in chronic blood sugar elevations. As Butler (2018) has stated, these insulin excesses may ultimately result in a deterioration of an individual's normal insulin response, and this contributes to the growth of type 2 diabetes, insulin resistance, and weight gain. Additionally, numerous fast food items have a high level of sugar, and this not only increases calories, but also leads to a deficiency of nutrients. Butler (2018) recommended limiting sugar consumption to 100 to 150 calories per day. According to Leech (2019), trans fats are classified as either natural, which occur naturally in some animal products and are not regarded as dangerous, or synthetic, which are hydrogenated vegetable oils and have major health consequences. However, trans fat is a kind of fat that is generated during food preparation, and this type of fat is commonly found in fried pies, pastries, pizza dough, crackers, and cookies. Butler (2018) believes that fast food is cheap, convenient, and aggressively advertised to consumers, and this method has proven successful for a number of businesses. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than one-third of American adults consume fast food on a daily basis, and when individuals consume too much of this junk food, their lifespans may be significantly lower than those who eat healthy (CDC, 2021). As Butler (2018) has stated, the more fast-food restaurants and convenience stores there are near people's homes, the more likely they are to have diabetes and obesity. Therefore, considering that excessive consumption of fast food has destructive effects on human health, reducing fast food intake is vital for improved health.

2.2 Changing the diet program daily and reducing fast food intake is vital for improved health.

One of the solutions to preventing excessive consumption of fast food is to identify healthy meals and develop strategies like changing diets to break this harmful habit. As Henderson (2018) has stated, there are several techniques for reducing junk food consumption. According to Henderson (2018), individuals may decrease their consumption of fast food by better planning their snacks, thinking before they drink, focusing on protein-based meals, and starting their day with a healthy meal. Additionally, Henderson (2018) has demonstrated that selecting healthier substitutions for meals, practicing mindful eating, purchasing less junk food, and reserving takeaways for special occasions are other strategies for reducing junk food consumption. Furthermore, avoiding junk food can save people money while also making them feel more energized, happy, and inspired to live a healthier lifestyle (Butler, 2018). Henderson (2018) believes that meals with fewer processed components are healthier and fresher. Nevertheless, avoiding junk food does not preclude people from enjoying food. Indeed, there are several substitutes for unhealthy meals that taste just as wonderful. However, some countries, such as Japan, South Korea, and Italy, have managed to keep obesity rates below 10% (Curley, 2018). As the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development has stated (OECD), these countries have reduced the rate of the obesity epidemic through some policies, such as food labelling, forcing restaurants to mention calories in food, increasing media campaigns to raise awareness of the need to eat healthier, and tightening regulation of advertising through TV and radio (OECD, 2019). Additionally, people may get information about other cultures, which can help in the battle against obesity. On the other hand, Qi Zhang and her colleagues (2014) argue that governments could coordinate the food environment, the food system, and educate and train people to reduce the prevalence of obesity. As Qi Zhang (2014) has stated, through taxation and subsidies, planning for school meals, dietary guidelines, importing and exporting food products, and food investment, governments can play a significant role in the battle against the obesity epidemic. Therefore, as a result of the advancements achieved in detecting the negative impacts of fast food on people's health and the control methods, changing diet programs is vital. In other words, the world menu needs a complete redesign, and that needs collaboration between individuals and governments.

2.3 The increased incidence of lack of physical activity

Another significant factor in the obesity epidemic is the increasing percentage of physical inactivity. Obesity is a chronic relapsing disease defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as an abnormal or excessive fat accumulation that offers a health risk and is impacted by a number of factors, most particularly the environment, biology, and genetics (World Obesity, n.d). However, obesity is frequently underestimated and characterized as a lifestyle condition that can be addressed by eating less and moving more. As World Obesity (n.d) has stated, the body utilizes energy in three primary ways, which are during physical activity, during the breakdown of food, and during rest, which is the base metabolic rate. According to World Obesity (n.d), people have minor control over their basal metabolic level, and it burns the majority of daily energy and provides for 60% to 80% of caloric intake. As World Obesity (n,d) mentioned, body movements and body size influence the energy consumption generated by physical actions. However, physical exercise should not be viewed as a solution to obesity, but rather as a means of improving general health and achieving weight control. Hence, obesity treatment is not only about weight loss. As WHO (2020) demonstrated, one in four individuals worldwide does not reach suggested rates of physical activity, and also, before COVID-19, global estimates predicted that 81% of teenagers did not have adequate. Additionally, global lockdowns and movement limitations imposed to contain the COVID-19 epidemic have further restricted people's options to be physically active, since fitness studios, schools, and leisure centers have been closed, and homeschool curriculum and work-from-home programs have also been implemented (WHO, 2020). In other words, this all contributes to the potential that physical activity levels will continue to decline. As World Obesity (n.d) has stated, inactivity increases the chance of developing diabetes, stroke, heart disease, and cancer by 20%–30% and decreases longevity by three–five years. By comparison, regular physical exercise lowers blood pressure and lowers the chance of type 2 diabetes, developing hypertension, heart attack, and stroke. Also, WHO (2020) mentioned that irregular physical exercise has also been shown to dramatically increase the possibility of getting dementia and Alzheimer's disease. Therefore, while physical exercise alone has no direct impact on weight reduction, it does have a significant influence on mental and physical health and may help individuals maintain a healthy weight, depending on the level and kind of exercise they perform.

2.4 increasing daily physical activity and changing sedentary behavior.

One of the solutions to a lack of activity is to identify major obstacles to physical activity and establish strategies to overcome them. Nowadays, people are directly involved in increasing and decreasing their physical activity. However, physical exercise includes popular activities such as cycling, playing, sports, dancing, and walking. As WHO (2020) suggested, most people should do at least 150–300 minutes of aerobic physical activity each week to keep their weight under control. In contrast, according to the CDC (2020), individuals are unable to conduct continuous daily activities due to a lack of time, social support, energy, motivation, fear of injury, a lack of ability, high prices, a lack of facilities, and weather conditions. Nevertheless, there are certain techniques for minimizing physical activity impediments. As CDC (2020) mentioned, individuals should maintain a record of their daily activities for one week. Additionally, individuals should have at least five 30-minute time intervals for physical exercise. Thus, in some simple ways, individuals could increase their physical activity by walking with their dog, climbing stairs, exercising while watching television, or parking farther away from their destination (CDC, 2020). However, it is beneficial to establish new relationships with physically active individuals, and people could encourage friends and family members to exercise with them and create social gatherings that include exercise. According to the CDC (2020), individuals have to learn how to exercise safely and efficiently depending on their age, fitness level, skill level, and health status. Moreover, policies must be devised to allow all people to participate in moderate-intensity physical activity on a consistent basis, including in professional, school, home, and community contexts. As World Obesity (n.d) has demonstrated, collaboration across organizations and stakeholders will be required for a number of activities, including the development of pedestrian and bicycle facilities, the extension and enhancement of public space access, and the promotion of active transportation. As the CDC (2022) has stated, governments can play a vital role through their creation of places that make it safe and easy for people to walk, cycle, roll in a wheelchair, and engage in physical activity. Governments could also increase physical activity rates through the development of media sports advertising, work with a number of sectors to organize various sports programs for all ages, build sports facilities in public places, reduce sports tariffs, and implement sports programs in schools and workplaces (CDC, 2022). Therefore, individuals could increase their physical activity in almost any condition by removing impediments. Nevertheless, the government's involvement should not be minimized.

3. Conclusion

To conclude, sedentary behavior is directly detrimental to people's health. While going to the gym is beneficial to one's health, it does not guarantee it. Even if people exercise, they are still at a greater risk of illness and mortality if they sit for extended periods of time. Also, avoiding sedentary behavior and engaging in continuous low-level activity throughout the day is critical for preserving excellent health and longevity. Individuals must alter their behaviors in order to remain healthy and live a long life. Individuals could increase their physical activity in almost any condition by removing impediments. And also, they can change their diet program in simple ways. However, the government's involvement should not be minimized.

4. Recommendations

- An appropriate understanding of the calories collected and consumed on a regular basis Daily dietary modifications
- Reduce the consumption of unhealthy foods.
- Starting the day with healthy foods
- Choosing the appropriate alternatives for fast foods
- Utilize easy strategies to enhance physical activity in the everyday life.
- Governments may incentivize citizens to purchase less fast foods.
- Governments are responsible for developing public-use sporting facilities.
- Encourage individuals to participate in sports.
- Awareness of the negative consequences of obesity
- Public participation
- Creating an appropriate urban space by governments

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