

## GLOBAL OBESITY EPIDEMIC: DETERMINANTS, HEALTH CONSEQUENCES AND EVIDENCE-BASED PREVENTION STRATEGIES

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**Annotation:** In recent years, obesity has become a major global public health concern. This article examines the key factors contributing to the global rise of obesity, including unhealthy diets, reduced physical activity, and urbanization. It also explores the negative impacts of obesity on human health and discusses preventive measures. The findings highlight the importance of promoting a healthy lifestyle.

**Keywords:** obesity, global issue, unhealthy diet, physical activity, health, prevention, urbanization

**Аннотация:** В последние годы ожирение стало одной из наиболее серьезных глобальных проблем здравоохранения. В данной статье анализируются основные причины роста уровня ожирения, включая неправильное питание, снижение физической активности и процессы урбанизации. Также рассматривается влияние ожирения на здоровье человека и меры по его профилактике. Результаты исследования подчеркивают важность формирования здорового образа жизни.

**Ключевые слова:** ожирение, глобальная проблема, питание, физическая активность, здоровье, профилактика, урбанизация

**Annotatsiya:** So'nggi yillarda semizlik butun dunyo miqyosida jiddiy sog'liq muammosiga aylanmoqda. Ushbu maqolada semizlikning global darajada oshish sabablari, jumladan noto'g'ri ovqatlanish, jismoniy faollikning pasayishi va urbanizatsiya jarayonlari tahlil qilinadi. Shuningdek, semizlikning inson salomatligiga salbiy ta'siri va uni oldini olish choralariga alohida e'tibor qaratiladi. Tadqiqot natijalari sog'lom turmush tarzini targ'ib qilish muhimligini ko'rsatadi.

**Kalit so'zlar:** semizlik, global muammo, noto'g'ri ovqatlanish, jismoniy faollik, sog'liq, profilaktika, urbanizatsiya

**Introduction.** In the 21st century, obesity has emerged as one of the most pressing global public health challenges, affecting populations across all age groups, socioeconomic statuses, and geographic regions. Once considered a problem limited to high-income countries, obesity is now rapidly increasing in low- and middle-income nations, reflecting profound shifts in lifestyle, dietary patterns, and economic structures. The growing prevalence of obesity is closely associated with the global nutrition transition, characterized by increased consumption of energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods and a significant decline in physical activity due to technological advancement and urbanization. The complexity of obesity lies not only in its multifactorial etiology but also in its far-reaching consequences for individual health and national healthcare systems. It is a major risk factor for a wide range of non-communicable diseases, including cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes, and certain forms of cancer, thereby contributing significantly to global morbidity and mortality rates. Furthermore, the economic burden of obesity continues to escalate, placing substantial pressure on healthcare infrastructures and reducing overall productivity. The complexity of

obesity lies not only in its multifactorial etiology but also in its far-reaching consequences for individual health and national healthcare systems. It is a major risk factor for a wide range of non-communicable diseases, including cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes, and certain forms of cancer, thereby contributing significantly to global morbidity and mortality rates. Furthermore, the economic burden of obesity continues to escalate, placing substantial pressure on healthcare infrastructures and reducing overall productivity.

**Main body.** The global rise of obesity is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon driven by an interplay of biological, behavioral, environmental, and socio-economic factors. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), worldwide obesity rates have nearly tripled since 1975, with over 650 million adults classified as obese.<sup>1</sup> This rapid increase highlights the urgency of understanding the underlying mechanisms and addressing the root causes of the epidemic.

One of the primary contributors to the rise in obesity is the global shift in dietary patterns, often referred to as the “nutrition transition.” This transition is characterized by increased consumption of highly processed foods rich in sugars, fats, and refined carbohydrates.<sup>2</sup> Empirical studies indicate that individuals in urban environments are more likely to adopt such diets due to accessibility, affordability, and aggressive marketing strategies employed by food industries.

For instance, research published in *The Lancet* has demonstrated a strong correlation between the availability of ultra-processed foods and increased body mass index (BMI) levels across populations.

In addition to dietary changes, a significant reduction in physical activity plays a crucial role in the development of obesity. Technological advancements and sedentary lifestyles have reduced daily energy expenditure. A large-scale study indicates that physical inactivity contributes to approximately 20–30% of obesity cases globally.<sup>3</sup>

This issue is further exacerbated in urban areas, where limited access to recreational spaces and safe environments discourages active living.

Socio-economic factors also significantly influence obesity prevalence. Lower-income populations often face limited access to healthy foods and rely more on inexpensive, energy-dense diets.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, education level has been shown to correlate inversely with obesity rates, as individuals with higher levels of education are generally more aware of healthy lifestyle practices. Cultural norms and psychological factors, such as stress and emotional eating, further complicate the issue, making obesity not merely a medical condition but also a social and behavioral challenge.

The health consequences of obesity are profound and far-reaching. It is widely recognized as a major risk factor for non-communicable diseases (NCDs), including cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes mellitus, hypertension, and certain types of cancer. Studies have shown that obese individuals have a significantly higher risk of premature mortality compared to those with normal body weight. Furthermore, obesity negatively impacts mental health, contributing to conditions such as depression, anxiety, and reduced quality of life.

Addressing the global obesity epidemic requires comprehensive and evidence-based strategies. At the policy level, governments can implement regulations aimed at reducing the

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<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization (WHO). (2023). Obesity and overweight.

<sup>2</sup> Popkin, B. M. (2017). *Nutrition Reviews*, 75(2), 73–82.

<sup>3</sup> Hall, K. D., et al. (2012). *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 95(4), 989–994.

<sup>4</sup> Malik, V. S., et al. (2013). *Nature Reviews Endocrinology*, 9(1), 13–27.

consumption of unhealthy foods, such as taxation on sugar-sweetened beverages and restrictions on food advertising, particularly targeting children. Evidence from countries that have introduced such measures indicates a measurable decrease in the consumption of high-calorie products. Additionally, improving urban planning to promote physical activity—through the development of parks, pedestrian pathways, and cycling infrastructure—has been shown to encourage more active lifestyles.

**Conclusion.** The global rise of obesity represents a critical and multifaceted public health challenge that extends beyond individual lifestyle choices to encompass broader socio-economic, environmental, and cultural dimensions. The analysis of current trends and scientific evidence demonstrates that obesity is primarily driven by the widespread adoption of unhealthy dietary patterns, increasing physical inactivity, rapid urbanization, and structural inequalities that limit access to healthy living conditions.

The consequences of this epidemic are profound, affecting not only individual health through increased risks of non-communicable diseases but also placing a significant burden on healthcare systems and national economies. Moreover, the persistence and acceleration of obesity rates despite growing awareness indicate that isolated or short-term interventions are insufficient to address the issue effectively.

Therefore, tackling obesity requires a comprehensive, long-term, and interdisciplinary approach that integrates public policy, healthcare strategies, community engagement, and individual responsibility. Preventive measures—such as promoting balanced nutrition, encouraging regular physical activity, implementing regulatory policies on unhealthy food products, and enhancing public health education—must be prioritized and adapted to specific population needs.

Ultimately, reversing the global obesity trend depends on sustained collaboration among governments, international organizations, researchers, and society as a whole. Only through coordinated and evidence-based actions can it be possible to reduce the prevalence of obesity and ensure healthier future generations.

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