Abstract

Obesity is a major risk factor for non-communicable diseases (NCDs), such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and cancers. The worldwide prevalence of obesity has almost doubled between 1980 and 2008. In some regions, such as Europe, the Eastern Mediterranean and the Americas, more than 50% of women are overweight. Tonga, Nauru and the Cook Islands show the highest prevalence of obesity worldwide, above 60% in men and in women. China and the United States are the countries that experienced the largest absolute increase in the number of overweight and obese people between 1980 and 2008, followed by Brazil and Mexico. The regions with the largest increase in the prevalence of female obesity were Central Latin America, Oceania and Southern Latin America. Updated data provide evidence that the progression of the epidemic has effectively slowed for the past ten years in several countries. In low-income countries obesity is generally more prevalent among the better-off, while disadvantaged groups are increasingly affected as countries grow. Many studies have shown an overall socio-economic gradient in obesity in modern industrialized societies. Rates tend to decrease progressively with increasing socio-economic status. Children obesity rates in Spain are amongst the highest in the OECD. One in 3 children aged 13 to 14 are overweight. Overweight in infants and young children is observed in the upper middle-income countries. However, the fastest growth occurs in the group of lower middle-income countries. There is a growing body of evidence for an inverse association between SES and child obesity in developed countries. The prevalence of overweight and obesity is high in all age groups in many countries, but especially worrying in children and adolescents in developed countries and economies in transition.

Keywords

Overweight, Obesity, Prevalence, Trends, Inequalities.