

OBESITY AND THE PANDEMIC

by:

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Obesity and overweight is the condition in which fat accumulation is excessive to such a level that it poses threat to the human body. According to studies conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO) the global burden of disease has grown to epidemic proportions, and over 4 million individuals died each year as a result of being overweight or obese (WHO, 2021).

Lockdowns not only triggered obesity in adults but children also fell victim. The strict measures of home confinement led to people buying and consuming larger quantities of processed foods, an increase in sedentary behavior and screen time as well as a decrease in physical activities. Thus, the term “covibesity” was introduced (McQueen, 2021). This phenomenon presents a great threat to humanity that needs immediate action and intervention.

Not only does obesity negatively affect body circulation and decrease lung capacity but it also weakens the immune system. Likewise, overweight increases the risk factor for noncommunicable diseases such as cardiovascular diseases (mainly heart disease and stroke), diabetes, musculoskeletal disorders (especially osteoarthritis – a highly disabling degenerative disease of the joints), and some cancers (including endometrial, breast, ovarian, prostate, liver, gallbladder, kidney, and colon) (WHO, 2021). Consequently, people with obesity are at a greater risk of severe illness should they be infected with the coronavirus. Obesity increases the risk of developing severe COVID-19 symptoms and triples the risk of requiring hospitalization (BusinessMirror, 2021). This is also the reason obese adults are given immediate access to vaccines.

There are several ways to prevent and even combat obesity while staying at home. One of them is, of course, staying away from foods with high levels of sugar and fats. Reading the nutritional label can help in determining what is in the food. Eating a diet rich in fiber, fruits and vegetables is advised. Dr. Jampolis of CNN recommended shopping smart which meant to shop for fruits and vegetables and aim for five servings per day. She also suggested buying a combination of fresh, frozen, and canned to last you at least a week or more. Fresh foods should be washed carefully to reduce sodium while canned foods should be consumed after the fresh foods are gone. Foods that can boost the immune system are highly recommended by experts as well. The amount of food taken each meal should also be considered. Special diets like calorie-restricted diets and intermittent fasting can also be studied if applicable to ones' state of being.

Regular exercise is one of the best ways to maintain good health. Since there are strict protocols against working outside, indoor exercises should be done instead. Walking inside the house, doing jumping ropes, or just climbing the stairs for a considerable amount of time can be a good way to get the body moving. There are a lot of physical exercises which can be done at home without the need for expensive equipment. The internet offers a wide range of such exercises.

Stress can lead to obesity as one resorts to food for comfort. De-stressing can also help obese people return to a healthy state. Taking time to relax ones' mind and body is one good way to de-stress. Yoga is another good way to give the body and mind the necessary rest it needs during stressful times. Getting good sleep is always a good way for our body to restore energy and balance so 8-9 hours of sleep is highly advised for adults.

There are also weight management programs that can easily be accessed online. The support of the people around is also needed to achieve the goal of weight loss. Consulting a dietician or a doctor is necessary to come up with a good plan on how to achieve the ideal weight of the person. Self-medication can be dangerous especially if there are health conditions that need consideration and immediate attention.

During this pandemic, there is nothing more important than having a healthy body so everybody must take time and exert effort to maintain it.

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