

Chapter 1

OBESITY IN ADOLESCENTS: WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?

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Obesity is a chronic condition that can trigger physical, psychological, social, and economic problems and is caused by over consumption of energy (Reinehr, 2010). Obesity, with technological advances over the last 20-30 years, has become a global health problem in many countries and has increased rapidly in all agegroups (Aksoydan & Çakır, 2011). Rates of obesity among adolescents in Turkey have increased at a dramatic rate along with the prevalence of weight-related diseases. Adolescence is a period of rapid growth and development. Obesity causes serious health problems, which also effect long-term health (Kane & Frisco, 2013). We sought answers to the following important questions:1) What are the main factors in the development of overweight and obese adolescents?2) What problems will excess weight cause in later life?3) What can we do about it? Examining the answers to these questions is important for the individual and society.

DEFINITION

Body mass index (BMI) is the ratio of weight (kg) to the square of height (m²). BMI is an easily measurable value used to predict weight-related diseases. In adults, a BMI value between 25 and 30 kg/m² is overweight and ≥ 30 kg/m² is obese. Obesity is categorized as class 1, class 2, and class 3, when BMI is 30-35 kg/m², 35-40 kg/m², and ≥ 40 kg/m², respectively (Consultation, 2000; Pi-Sunyer et al., 1998). Classification in childhood and adolescence is different. BMI values are calculated according to age and gender, because growth in children and adolescents occurs as an increase in height rather than weight gain. The National Center for Health Care Statistics (NCHS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported BMI standards for children and adolescents. The following definitions are used to categorize weight status for children between 2 and 20 years of age (Baker et al., 2005).

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(Geserick et al., 2018). These studies indicate that excessive weight gain during the pre-school years is an important predictor of permanent obesity. Long-term follow-up studies indicate that overweight children with obese parents typically continue into an adulthood of obesity. In a study involving a large international cohort, similar findings show 82% of the children (11.4 ± 4.0 years) who were obese in childhood remained obese as adults at follow-up after age 23 (Juonala et al., 2011). The risk of adult obesity increases with age and a high childhood BMI. The severity of obesity during adolescence is an important determinant for whether obesity will continue in adulthood.

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