

Rising Overweight and Obesity in Children Under 5 Years Old: Need To Basic Practical Actions

Dear Editor,

Childhood obesity is considered as one of the most serious public health challenges of the 21st century that has increased significantly over the past three decades. This global problem with the increasing prevalence at an alarming rate steadily affects many low- and middle-income countries.^[1] It was estimated that in 2017, 5.6 percent or 38.3 million children under 5 years around the world were overweight. The global overweight children under 5 years increased from %4.9 in 2000 to 5.6% in 2017.^[2] According to the world health organization report 2014, six global nutrition targets for 2025 has been declared, include stunting, anemia, low birth weight, overweight, breastfeeding, and wasting. The target for childhood overweight is to prevent an increase in it.^[3] The most effective components and settings in obesity prevention programs in children are including family based programmes, community settings, primary care settings, and primary schools.^[4,5] The countries have agreed on the nutrition targets; however, despite some recent progress the world is off track to reach these targets. Ultimately, ending malnutrition is a political choice that leaders from governments, donors, civil society organizations, and businesses at all international, national, and subnational levels must take.^[6,7] Regarding childhood overweight and obesity, several factors affect weight gain among children, including behavioral factors, consumption culture, diet, lifestyle, family role especially mothers, physical activity, genetic, environmental, demographic, economic and technological characteristics, screening and other factors. Obviously, the elimination of the underlying causes is an important factor in preventing and reducing the overweight of children. However, the main issue is the little or no attention from many families, policy makers in the field of children nutrition as well as governments for implementing nutrition policies. If the issue of children's overweight are placed more seriously on governments' agendas, the desired targets for 2025 will be approachable. Especially in Asia and Africa, that include about half and a quarter of overweight children under 5 years, respectively. Mass media also plays a very prominent role in influencing the improvement of nutritional culture, particularly through the impact on family nutritional culture that plays an important role in shaping the nutritional behavior of children. It seems

that the current increasing trend of childhood overweight and obesity in the world, and compared to the set targets, indicates the failure of policies in the most countries of the world. A need for the global consultation to resolve this issue is necessary.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

Mohammad Mohseni, Aidin Aryankhesal^{1,2}

School of Health Management and Information Sciences, Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran, ¹Health Management and Economics Research Center, Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran,

²Department of Health Services Management, School of Health Management and Information Sciences, Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

Address for correspondence:

*Dr. Aidin Aryankhesal,
Department of Health Services Management, School of Health Management and Information Sciences, Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran.*

E-mail: aryankhesal.a@iums.ac.ir

Received: 10 Jun 20 **Accepted:** 30 Aug 20

Published: 29 Mar 21

References

1. Han JC, Lawlor DA, Kimm SY. Childhood obesity. *Lancet* 2010;375:1737-48.
2. Unicef, WHO, World Bank Group. Levels and trends in child malnutrition. 2018. [Last cited on 2018 Aug 05]; Available from: <http://www.who.int/nutgrowthdb/2018-jme-brochure.pdf?ua=1>.
3. Mohseni M, Aryankhesal A, Kalantari N. Prevention of malnutrition among children under 5 years old in Iran: A policy analysis. *PLoS One* 2019;14:e0213136.
4. Merrotsy A, McCarthy A, Flack J, Coppinger T. Obesity prevention programs in children: The most effective settings and components. A literature review. *J Obesity Chronic Dis* 2018;2:62-75.
5. Pirasteh A, Pouraram H, Kholdi N, Abtahi M. Discretionary salt intake and readiness for behavioral change among women in Tehran. *Int J Prev Med* 2019;10:167.
6. Achadi E, Ahuja A, Bendech MA, Bhutta ZA, De-Regil LM, Fanzo J, *et al.* Global nutrition report 2016: From promise to impact: Ending malnutrition by 2030: International Food Policy Research Institute; 2016.

Letter to Editor

7. Mohseni M, Aryankhesal A, Kalantari N. Prevalence of malnutrition among Iran's under five-year-old children and the related factors: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Iran J Pediatrics* 2018;28:1-9. .

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work non-commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

Access this article online	
Quick Response Code: 	Website: www.ijpvmjournal.net/www.ijpm.ir
	DOI: 10.4103/ijpvm.IJPVM_225_20

How to cite this article: Mohseni M, Aryankhesal A. Rising overweight and obesity in children under 5 years old: need to basic practical actions. *Int J Prev Med* 2021;12:29.

© 2021 International Journal of Preventive Medicine | Published by Wolters Kluwer - Medknow