

Emerging Issues in Nutrition - '10 Things You Need to Know About Obesity'

It is generally agreed that food is a key to health. Poor nutrition, foodborne disease and lack of secure access to good food contribute to disease and death. Conversely, better diets, food safety and food security (*Food security is defined as access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life and includes at a minimum: a) the ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, and b) the assured ability to acquire acceptable food in socially acceptable ways (e.g. without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing, and other coping strategies). Food insecurity exists whenever the availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or the ability to acquire acceptable food in socially acceptable ways is limited or uncertain [1].*) will reduce or prevent suffering to individuals and societies, help cut health care systems costs and bring social and economic benefits.

Obesity is one of the consequences of poor diet and physical inactivity. There are 10 things you should know about obesity:

9. What is it and how you are doing... governments need to know the extent of the epidemic in their jurisdictions (who is overweight and why? is the first question in starting to address the issue) The International Classification of adult underweight, overweight and obesity according to Body Mass Index for adults [2]. Try the BMI calculator on the Better Health website <http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au>
10. Obesity has reached epidemic proportions... the proportion of overweight and obese Australians has doubled in the last 10-20 years, 33% will be obese by 2015[3]
1. Children are particularly in danger...10% will be obese by 2010 and once obese, these children are likely to be obese adults. There is already a predicted lower life expectancy for this generation due to obesity related illness.
2. Overweight or obese people have increased risk of developing serious diseases... including diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, stroke, some cancers and psychological conditions. It reduces length and quality of life and there is increased risk with each weight gain
3. Obesity is about food...too much of the wrong types of food and drinks. Need to encourage eating a wide range of foods from the five food groups (fruits, vegetables and legumes, plain breads and cereals, low-fat dairy foods and lean meats, fish and chicken).
4. Obesity is about activity...too little daily activity. Need to view movement as an opportunity.
5. Obesity discriminates... it is more common in disadvantaged populations. People on a lower income, with less education and less access to care have less access to a healthy diet and physical activity environments and activities.
6. Obesity is preventable!
7. Causes are complex and solution is difficult... there is a need to engage many sectors including the health sector –ranging from agriculture and food processing, manufacturing and trade to transport, retailing, catering and advertising.
8. You can do something about it... Many governments and organisations are tackling the issues head on.



References:

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2. World Health Organization, *Food and Health in Europe: a basis for action*, in *WHO Regional Publications, European Series, No. 96, A*. Robertson, et al., Editors. 2004.
3. World Health Organization, *Obesity: preventing and managing the global epidemic. Report of a WHO Consultation.*, in *WHO Technical Report Series 894*. 2000, World Health Organization: Geneva.

Christina Pollard, Principal Advisor

Nutrition

Food Unit, Environmental Health Directorate

Department of Health in Western Australia

Phone: 08 9388 4983

Fax: 08 9382 8119

Email: Christina.Pollard@health.wa.gov.au