

Trends of Overweight and Obesity and its Associated Risk Factors among Adolescent School Students in Tripoli

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Background: Adolescence is a vulnerable period for the development of obesity and also appears to be a critical period for establishing risk factors for some chronic diseases in adulthood. The proportion of adolescents who are overweight or obese is rapidly increasing worldwide. Available statistics indicate that an alarming proportion of people in most Arab countries suffer from obesity. Studies have revealed that the prevalence of overweight and obesity among adolescents in Arab countries ranges from 18% to 44%.

Objective: To investigate the current overweight and obesity trends and its associated risk factors in adolescent school students in Tripoli.

Design and setting: Through a cross sectional study approach a sample of about 400 students from 4 mixed schools which were divided into 2 public and 2 private schools, were assessed. Data were collected using an interview questionnaire, anthropometric, and dietary tools. BMI was determined using the CDC BMI- for- age growth charts.

Main outcome measures: Overweight and obesity trends, physical activity levels, sedentary behaviors, lifestyle and dietary factors of adolescent school students.

Results: The results showed that the overall prevalence of overweight and obesity among the whole studied sample was 32 % with a statistically significant difference between males (40%) & females (28%). A significantly higher proportion of public school students (91%) compared to private school adolescent students (72%) had low physical activity levels. Also public school adolescent students showed a significantly higher disturbed meal pattern (44% compared to 34% in private school students). In addition the whole studied sample (62%) reported low weekly intake of fruits and vegetables.

Conclusion: The alarming overall high prevalence of low physical activity levels, disturbed meal pattern and unhealthy dietary intake indicates the necessity of formulation of policies and nutritional strategies to stop the rise of overweight and obesity among adolescent students in Tripoli, Lebanon.