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OBESITY

Nowadays our modern, sedentary society is rapidly migrating from physical activity to electronic addiction, creating an epidemic of obesity. Obesity is one of the fastest growing diseases in the world, causing various socio-economic issues. In well-developed and developing industrialized countries, it is even more acute. Obesity and overweight are the terms that determine the excessive body weight. Generally, overweight and obesity ranges are determined by means of a number called the "body mass index" (BMI). BMI is calculated by measuring height and weight proportions. It is related with the amount of body fat in the person. An adult who has a BMI between 25 and 29.9 is considered overweight, while, an adult who has a BMI of 30 or higher is considered obese. Also, in children and teenagers aging from 2 to 20 years old, a BMI in the 86th to 94th percentiles for gender and age is consider overweight; while, a BMI in the 95th or higher percentile is consider obese ("Overweight and Obesity").

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the issue of obesity in today's modern society, by analyzing its prevalence, causes, and consequences. Also, it will emphasize on possible preventive measures for obesity.

Prevalence

Obesity is a serious global issue, which is affecting all levels of the society. However, the prevalence of high BMI is higher in the developed countries and among upper class societies. According to the reports of World Health Organization (WHO), the prevalence of overweight and obesity is highest in the regions of America with 62 percent for overweight of both sexes, and 26 percent for obesity and lowest in the South East Asian region, with merely 14 percent overweight of both sexes, and 3 percent are suffering from obesity (“Obesity”). According to the reports of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), almost 36% of overall population in the US is suffering from obesity. Each year, the US government has to bear the economic burden of \$147 billion due the medical cost of obesity (“Overweight and Obesity”).

Childhood obesity is also an increasing concern in most of the countries. The US and Mexico are among the top countries with the high rate of childhood obesity. During the past two decades, the rate of overweight and obese children almost doubled (from 15.4% to 25.6%) in the US. It was estimated that the number of obese and overweight children under the age of five was more than 42 million in the world in 2010 (“Overweight and Obesity”).

Causes

Although there are hormonal and genetic factors, which highly influence on body weight, obesity occurs when a person’s overall calorie intake is tremendously higher than the calories required for the regular daily activities. The body stores these extra calories in terms of fat, causing obesity. Liberalized international food markets have made the high energy food available. Food subsidies have changed the mode in favor of less healthy food products. Also, marketing strategy of big super markets and

food companies is a major reason behind growing rates of obesity in the society. Such companies encourage bulk, excessive purchases by offering discounts on supersized products. Moreover, high rates of healthy food and tempting advertising of fast-food with low prices distract people from healthy diet and eating habits (Shah).

Social surrounding and lifestyle also play a vital role in determining obesity. In developed countries, availability of various public and personal transport facilities, more spaces for recreation, high reliance on electronic gadgets for completing physical tasks, are the factors of lavish, comfortable lifestyle, which encourage obesity and other health-related issues (Shah). It is a well-known fact that woman's weight increases during pregnancy. However, some women find it difficult to lose weight after pregnancy, contributing to the development of obesity in women. Certain medications can stimulate weight gain, if the person does not lead a proper diet or activity. Also, some medical problems, such as arthritis, low thyroid function, Prader-Will syndrome, Polycystic ovary syndrome, Cushing's syndrome, and other diseases can trigger obesity (Mayo Clinic Staff).

Effects

Obesity has the long ranging consequences, which not only damage the health, but also, ruin social life of the person. People, who are suffering from obesity, are highly prone to have cardiovascular diseases, have problems with blood-pressure, suffer from diabetes, infertility etc. The pressure of excessive weight causes immense stress on the joints of the knees and hips, leading to diseases like osteoarthritis. Overweight and obese women are exposed to a higher risk of cancers like colon, breast, uterus, and gallbladder. Also, overweight men have an increased risk of prostate and colon cancers. Sleep apnea and respiratory problems are also identified in

obese people (“Health Effects of Obesity”).

Social and Psychological Issues

In a culture, where usually the norms for physical attractiveness are related to being thin and slim, people who are overweight suffer from prejudices and discrimination of the society. Overweight people are often considered as lazy or weak-willed. Therefore, they often find it difficult to find a partner, since constant disapproval and rejection, provoke low self-esteem, lack of confidence, and reduce the quality of social life among obese people. This promotes several psychological disorders, in both men and women, which results in a serious need for medical treatments and therapies. Psychological disorders like depression, chronic anxiety disorder, are seen in most of the obese people. Due to poor self-image, such people are more tempted to drugs, alcohol and suicide (“Health Effects of Obesity”).

Preventive Measures

Obesity causes various life-threatening health issues. However, it is possible to overcome it through obesity disorder. Adopting healthy lifestyle, exercising daily, and long-term commitment to stick on balanced diet, will help a person to prevent further weight gain and steadily tackle with obesity. According to the various researches, breastfed babies are 15 to 25 percent less likely to become overweight. Parents who eat healthy food and are physically active set an example for their children, therefore, it increases the chances that their children will do the same. Children should be encouraged to play outdoor games, rather than computer or video games. Daily cardio exercises and meditation lasting approximately 30 minutes can help to activate metabolism and burn extra fats. Sticking to the healthy-weight plan without any interruption increases the chances of

long-term success (“How to Prevent Obesity”).

Conclusion

Obesity is an epidemic issue in the world, especially in the US. Marketing of unhealthy food products, expensive healthy food, promotion of unhealthy eating habits, and techno-savvy lifestyle are the major reasons of constant growth of obesity disorder in the society. Calling for awareness about consequences of obesity, providing education about healthy lifestyles, and encouraging physical activities, sports, and exercises will make it possible to conquer the overweight and obesity issues.