

Editorial on childhood overweight

Siddiqui Rafat*

Department of Nutrition and Food Science, Virginia State University, USA

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There has been a dramatic rise in the numbers of overweight children who are under the age of 5 years. In 2013, organizations like UNICEF, WHO estimated that the number of overweight children worldwide increased from 32 million to 42 million between 2000 and 2013. The existence of childhood overweight problem is increasing in all parts of the world, but particularly in Africa and Asia. If the numbers continue to rise, the percentage of overweight children under the age of 5 years is expected to rise from 7% in 2012 to 11% by 2025 in the world.

In the year 2012, the World Health Assembly Resolution had implemented a Comprehensive plan for the maternal, infant and young child nutrition, which consisted of six global nutrition targets for the year 2025. The fourth target of policy brief is: 'No Increase in Childhood Overweight'. The main purpose of this policy brief is to create attention, increase investment and develop action for a set of policies that are cost-effective which help the States and their partners that are involved to prevent the constant increase in overweight among children by ensuring that the target is accomplished.

Children coming under overweight or obese category are prone to health problems that include type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, asthma and other respiratory diseases, liver diseases and sleeping disorders. They might suffer from psychological problems such as low self-esteem caused by social isolation which leads to depression. Childhood overweight also increase the risk of severe obesity, non-communicable diseases (NCDs), disability in adulthood and sometimes may result in premature death. The costs of the escalating problem of childhood overweight and obesity are economic and can be considered in terms of financial strains that are placed on health-care systems and in terms of loss in productivity economically.

The makers of the Policy Brief should consider prioritizing the following actions to ensure that there is decrease in the percentage of overweighed or obese children under the age

of 5 years:

- Developing consistent public policies from production to consumption and across related sectors, through formation of a cross-governmental task force, to organize the development and strengthening the concerned policies ensuring healthy diets throughout the life-span.
- To make sure that there is a nationally approved set of food-based dietary guidelines for all the age groups, which reinforce actions that improve nutritional standards among population.
- Taking measures in addressing the exposures of early life, by improving nutritional status and growth patterns, including: Enhancing the community understanding and social norms related to growth and development of children; upgrading the food systems promoting healthy dietary practices throughout the life; regulations on marketing of complementary food and non-alcoholic beverages to children.
- Performing research on the root causes of overweight and obesity, Modifications in conventional food system followed for past 40 years, availability of healthy foods, strategies to ensuring provision of food that meets the nutritional needs of people promoting safe and diversified healthy diets.
- establishing an empowering environment that advances actual work, to address stationary way of life from the beginning phases of life.

*Correspondence to

Siddiqui Rafat

Department of Nutrition and Food Science
Virginia State University
Virginia, USA

E-mail: rsiddiqui@vsu.edu

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