

CHILDHOOD OBESITY: FUTURE THREATS

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Childhood obesity warrants urgent attention as a critical public health priority due to its rapid global rise and long-term consequences. Globally, the prevalence has increased more than tenfold over the past four decades, with over 340 million children and adolescents (5–19 years) classified as overweight or obese, and an additional 39 million children under 5 years affected. In Bangladesh, the burden is also escalating, particularly in urban areas, where studies report prevalence ranging from 8–17% among school-aged children, compared to 2–5% in rural settings. This trend reflects ongoing nutritional transition, reduced physical activity, and increased consumption of energy-dense foods, creating a dual burden alongside persistent undernutrition. Childhood obesity is strongly associated with early development of non-communicable diseases, including type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular disorders, thereby extending morbidity into productive adult years. The economic implications are substantial, with global estimates suggesting obesity-related costs may reach 3–4% of GDP in some countries due to healthcare expenditure and productivity loss. Therefore, prioritizing prevention through early-life interventions, public health policies, and community awareness is essential.

Keywords: Childhood obesity, Non-communicable diseases, Nutritional transition

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