

“MAJOR CAUSES LEADING TO OBESITY IN ADOLESCENT GIRLS”

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Health is not a static phenomenon but a dynamic life process which begins at birth and is governed by genetic nutritional and environmental factors throughout life. Obesity is an increasingly important public health problem of global significance. It is a major focus of attention in India. Improved health facilities, increase in income and availability of food and decrease in physical activity have contributed to this epidemic form of overweight and obesity especially in the urban areas of the developed and developing countries. A total of 100 adolescent girls of 12-18 yrs of age were selected by informed consent. Information regarding the age, family income, food habit, amount of pocket money spent on food by the respondents were elicited using the questionnaire.

Causes of Obesity-When a person consumes more calories than he burns then the excess calories get stored in the form of fat causing obesity.

Age and sex-It can occur at any age in either sex as long as the person is under positive energy balance. Studies conducted at Nutrition Foundation of India have shown more females than males are found to be over weight in all age groups.

Genetic factors-Genetic inheritance probably influences 50-70 per cent a person's chance of becoming fat more than any other factor. A genetic base regulate species differences in body fat and sexual differences within a species. Within families the chance is 80 per cent if both parents are obese and 50 per cent if one parent is obese.

Physical activity- Obesity is found in persons who lead sedentary lives and pay less importance to physical education. Though obesity can occur at any age, this is more common during middle age when physical activity decreases without corresponding decrease in food consumption. Obesity can also be seen in school children who spend too much time on studies and who do not exercise or who do not participate in school games or who use vehicles for commuting to schools.

Psychological factor-Food is one of the many stimulants of endorphin, 'feel good' neurotransmitter. Self gratification, self punishment, depression, anxiety and stress may lead to excess caloric intake. Recent

studies have shown that school children take to more fatty foods as their lives grow stressful.

Endocrine factor-Obesity is found in hypothyroidism, hypogonadism and cushing's syndrome. Obesity is common at puberty, pregnancy and menopause, suggesting endocrine may be a factor in obesity.

Socio-economic status-Obesity is common in prosperous countries like UK, USSR and USA and people from higher socio-economic status of developing countries. They have the purchasing power and availability of surplus food. Obesity is rare in primitive societies.

Eating habits-Eating in between meals, preference to sweets, refined foods and fat are established very early in life. The consumption of the diet, the periodicity with which it is eaten and the amount of energy derived from it are all relevant to the aetiology of obesity. The diet containing more energy than needed may lead to prolonged post prandial hyperlipidemia and to deposition of triglycerides in adipose tissue resulting in obesity.

Conclusion-Obesity is the state in which there is a generalized accumulation of excess adipose tissue in the body leading more than 20 per cent of desirable weight. Over weight is a condition where the body weight is 10-20 per cent greater than the mean standard weight for age, height and sex. Obesity prevention should be the primary intervention point, with improved education of parents and adolescents regarding appropriate eating patterns and behavior. It is necessary to give accurate information about dieting normal weight, normal changes in body composition and the importance of maintaining a healthy weight for optimal physical health during adolescence. Such information can be provided effectively through television, the internet and print media, to which adolescents are exposed. It is suggested that when weight loss is necessary, the most appropriate method remains modest caloric restriction incorporating a balanced intake of macronutrients and micronutrients, along with increased physical activity with some herbal and ayurvedic treatment.

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