

More obese teens, children going under knife to lose weight: study



A representational image of a person standing on a weight machine. — Pixabay/File

A new study published Tuesday (May 30, 2023) has revealed that more and more US teens and children are undergoing bariatric surgeries to lose weight, making it a common and easy way to deal with the problem.

The data published in *JAMA Pediatrics* suggested that the number of metabolic and bariatric surgeries completed among youth ages 10 to 19 has been on the rise since 2016, which was strong in the first two years of COVID lockdown days.

On the other side, the number of such surgeries plunged in adults at the same time.

The number of youth seeking surgeries surged to 19% between the years 2020 and 2021.

According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), childhood obesity is a serious problem in the US.

"It affects about 1 in 5 children and teens – nearly 15 million between ages 2 and 19. And severe obesity, which is when an individual's body mass index is at least 20% higher than what is considered obese, is becoming especially prevalent."

Two kinds of surgeries, Metabolic and bariatric surgeries, alter parts of the stomach and intestines in such a way that affects how the body absorbs food.

It can lead to changes in food consumption, as a person may feel less hungry and more full.

Weight-loss surgeries have historically been underutilised

The authors suggested that these weight-loss surgeries have historically been underutilised because of barriers to access, including low referral rates from paediatricians and poor insurance coverage.

They also said: "But earlier this year, the American Academy of Pediatrics published new guidelines for the treatment of obesity."

The new guidelines urge prompt use of behaviour therapy and lifestyle changes and, for the first time, recommend surgery and medications for some young people. Teens with severe obesity in particular should be evaluated for surgery."

Sarah Messiah, Professor and pediatric obesity researcher at UTHealth Houston School of Public Health in USA and co-author of the study was of the view that "this data shows us that adolescents and their families are indeed interested in pursuing surgery as a treatment option if they are given access and a good candidate."

She went on to add that "many studies show that cardiometabolic disease risk factors track strongly from childhood into adulthood and surgery is a safe and effective treatment option that allows adolescents to age into adulthood more healthily." – www.geo.tv/latest, May 31, 2023