

## Healthy lifestyles urged as nation's obesity rates climb



Jin Ding/China Daily

With obesity rates in China climbing fast, especially among youngsters, experts have called for improving awareness about healthy lifestyles and strengthening treatment of the disease. Worldwide, the obesity rates for adults more than doubled between 1990 and 2022, and quadrupled among children and adolescents, according to new study results released by the medical journal *The Lancet*.

The total number of people living with obesity has surpassed 1 billion globally, according to the *Lancet*'s analysis, released ahead of World Obesity Day, which fell on March 4, 2024.

The growing burden of obesity has deeply affected China, as the proportion of female adults considered obese jumped around fourfold, while the proportion of male adults who are obese surged elevenfold. In 2022, the rate stood at 7.8 percent for Chinese women and 8.9 percent for Chinese men, according to the study.

Obesity is more prominent among younger people in China. The country's obesity rate for girls increased from 0.6 percent in 1990 to 7.7 percent in 2022, and rose from 1.3 percent to 15.2 percent in 2022 for boys, the study found.

"It is very concerning that the epidemic of obesity that was evident among adults in much of the world in 1990 is now mirrored in school-aged children and adolescents," said Majid Ezzati, a professor at Imperial College London and the study's corresponding author.

"It is vital we significantly improve the availability and affordability of healthy, nutritious foods," he added.

### **Importance of preventing and managing obesity from early life to adulthood**

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director general of the World Health Organization, said, "This new study highlights the importance of preventing and managing obesity from early life to adulthood through diet, physical activity and adequate care, as needed."

While poor diet, lack of physical activity and genetics all play a role in obesity, the National Health Commission, China's top health authority, said earlier this year that unbalanced diet and eating habits, as well as inappropriate infant feeding practices, are fundamental factors leading to the condition.

Hu Jiajin, a professor at Chinese Medical University's Institute of Health Sciences, said that diet, workout habits and other lifestyle choices are closely linked to the risk of obesity.

For children, weight gain during their mother's pregnancy, regularly skipping breakfast, excessive intake of sweet foods and drinks, lack of physical activities and insufficient sleep can all add to the risk of becoming obese, he said.

"It is important to pool and coordinate resources from all sectors of society to tackle obesity," Hu said.

Wang Yishu, deputy director of Beijing Xiaotangshan Hospital's internal medicine department and a top political adviser, said that while public awareness of managing weight is growing, more efforts are needed to improve and formulate uniform protocols for diagnosis and treatment of obesity.

"I suggested setting up a national-level clinical diagnosis and treatment committee targeting obesity and gathering sporadic obesity-related guidelines into a standard protocol," Wang said in an interview with China Central Television during this year's recently concluded two sessions — the annual gatherings in Beijing of China's top legislative and political advisory bodies.

She added that hospitals should build multidisciplinary centers covering the fields of nutrition, exercise psychology and drug use for obesity, just like the diabetes centers found in many regions. -

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