

Makalah Akademia

OBESITY: A SILENT KILLER

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"Some people might not notice the early warning for obesity as our body weight did not increase the weight overnight and it will develop slowly until it becomes a lifestyle or norm. Thus this is why obesity become a silent killer and for some, it might be too late to make a change without professional intervention."

Eating is a natural need for humans. We eat to survive and be healthy and healthier bodies lead to advancing human achievement. But what if, the food that you eat become your silent enemy, slowly killing you every day? It sounds very alarming, yet we tend to ignore it as food is the source of our energy and for some people, it is a source of comfort. Eating food in a moderate amount and according to the guidelines suggested by a medical professional will help you in maintaining your health however if you take food without control for a long time it will lead you to develop the condition known as Obesity.

What is Obesity?

Obesity is a condition described when a person has Body Mass Index or BMI over 30 to 39.9. In general, men with a waist size of 94 cm or more and women with a waist size of 80 cm or more can be classified as having obese bodies. However, one must take note the BMI class cannot use for those who are athletic, nursing mothers, and children. Figure 1 shows the classification of BMI.

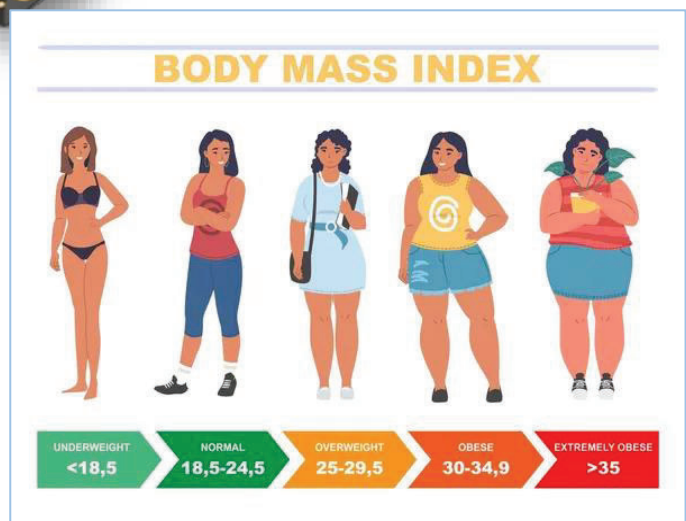


Figure 1. Classification of Body Mass Index according to classes. Source: iStock Images

The natural course that can influence certain people to prone to become obese is due to the genetic disorders that reflect the behaviour in uncontrollable food intake. However study had found that psychological distress (depression, anxiety, low self-esteem and suicidal ideation) and environmental factors (stress and low quality of life) are significantly becoming contributing factors to obesity in Malaysia.

According to WHO global status report on non-communicable disease in 2014, about 13 percent of adult around the world is obese and this prevalence will continue to rise by 2025. Meanwhile, among Southeast Asian countries, Malaysia had recorded the highest obesity rate in adults where between 1996 until 2015, the prevalence of obesity in Malaysian adults had four-folded from 4.4 percent to 17.7 percent for the recent year.

Obesity had being identified as a global concern as it increases the risk of various chronic diseases such as diabetes, osteoarthritis, cancers, and major vascular diseases. Besides that obesity also had a negative effect on the weight-bearing joint which may later lead to functional locomotor disability and this is the main cause of physical inactivity that eventually impacts the individual's quality of life and psychological well-being as it could lead to depression or low self-esteem.



Figure 2. Delicious food all around the world
Source: Time Tips,2022

How does obesity begin?

When did the love-hate relationship between humans and food start?

All can be traced back at least 25,000 years ago. This is when having an overweight or obese body indicated prosperity, power, and fertility in humans. It can be clearly seen in the painting or sculptures from ancient civilizations in Rome, Greece, Babylon, China, and India where overweight and obese figures was shown as a sign of power and wealth. This occurs due to the limited source of food and the need for peasants to do heavy labour and in the meantime, only wealthy people can effort to have a luxurious meal that is high in sugar and fat.

The wealthy people also had the privilege of having a servant to do their hard labour. This can be seen in Figure 3 as it shows the beauty and healthy standard during Tang Dynasty.



Figure 3. Figurine showing fat lady from Tang Dynasty

Source:

https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/culture/2014-07/25/content_17916764_4.html

At that time, obese people are in rarity and the issue of malnutrition is more of national concern. The peasant are needed as a source for labour, safety especially during the war, and a source of tax. As you can see it did not change much as the situation right now, however, the health of the human resource is very important as it signifies the survival of a nation or civilization. Malaysia started as an agricultural country and most of Malaysians had been customized to having a diet that was high in carbohydrates and sugar when they grow up. It did not become an issue as most of the calories taken from that food will be burned out due to heavy labour. However the issues arise when most of Malaysian right know are no longer working in the physical or heavy labour work like the previous generation, instead, most of them are now working in a deskwork.

Without changing their eating habits accordingly to their body current need, this leads to an increased number of overweight and obesity in Malaysia. This had being addressed by Deputy Health Minister, Datuk Dr Noor Azmi Ghazali at the press conference in March 2022, where he said that about 50.1 percent of Malaysians were overweight with 19.7 percent of them facing obesity in 2019, which means one in two adults is now overweight and about 30 percent of children between aged of 5 and 13 are obese (This can be seen in Figure 4).

Datuk Dr Noor Azmi Ghazali also said that several initiatives had been made by the government to address these issues such as imposing excise duty on sugary drinks. Yet, these issues cannot be resolved if the public did not play a role in reducing the rate of obesity by changing their eating habits and their lifestyles.

In China, there are rules for their government servant to maintain their normal BMI during their service, meanwhile, in Japan, overweight individuals had to go to a dieting classes and if they fail to attend the classes, the companies that employ them or the local governments of where they are staying must pay fines to the federal government. With that, those country can control the overweight and obesity issues in their country.

Obesity is a silent killer and a ticking bomb as an obese individual has an 81 percent higher risk of heart disease and 64 percent of stroke. Besides that, it also had a negative effect on the economy about RM70.1 billion or about 5.1 percent of Malaysia's gross domestic income had been spent on medical expenses. This also alarming as this killer had slowly affected children and young adults. As it can increase the risk of developing heart disease, diabetes, organ failure, weight-bearing disease (Osteoarthritis and Rheumatoid arthritis), and fertility issues. This disease will gradually impact patients' live slowly until it's too late. Some people do take a short cut or an alternative, however, it can be very dangerous as it has a long-term effect. This shortcut was known as a "skinny pill" or a miracle drug. The Ministry of Health recently had listed and banned certain product that contains Sibutramine, one of the major contain in a skinny pill as it can cause rapid and irregular heart rate, vomiting, diarrhea, nausea and insomnia. Some even can cause liver and kidney failure it taken in the long term.

MALAYSIANS, WEIGHTWISE

The 2019 NHMS findings showed a rising trend in weight gain & that 50.1% of adults were:

30.4%
Overweight

19.7%
Obese

Particularly high among:

54.7%
Women

60.9%
Those aged 55-59

The 2019 NHMS findings also revealed that:

29.8%

of children aged 5-17 were overweight/obese

Southeast Asia adult obesity prevalence:

*Based on the 2019 World Population Review

15.6%
Malaysia

14.1%
Brunei

10%
Thailand

6.9%
Indonesia

Contributing factors:



Food



Physical activity



Environment



Genetics



Disease, stress, medicine

FAST FACTS

In February 2020, the WHO stated that "obesity has reached epidemic proportions globally..."

...with at least 2.8 million people dying each year as a result of being overweight/obese".

Body mass index benchmark:
Overweight
> 25kg/m²
Obese
> 30kg/m²

Source: National Health & Morbidity Survey (NHMS) World Health Organisation (WHO)

Published: 22/6/2020 Bernama Infographics

Figure 4: Fact about Malaysian obesity fact

Source: Bernama Infographics

From my experience, the most important thing to improve your body weight is to realize and admitted that you are having issues and you need to do something before it's too late. A lot of people tend to ignore the early sign such as having discomfort when breathing even when only climbing two-story buildings, your old clothes can no longer fit you, feeling fatigued and sleepy during the day, sometimes having shortness of breath when walking and most obvious of all you can't even wear your wedding ring. Do not ignore it! Your body and health are crying for your help!!

Some recommendations had being given by the experts to reduce the extra weight that we had gained which are following healthy plate concepts of Quarter quarter half (1/4 of plate for grains or grain products, 1/4 plate of proteins, and 1/2 plate of fruits and vegetables) and exercise regularly (as for adults, 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity such as brisk walking, cycling with light effort and recreational sport per week).

It might be small and appeared not significant in the first place, however one must remember that the journey toward the healthier version of you involved one small step every day and your body will thank yourself later for it. Nobody can do it for you...you are responsible for your health and your body.