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Topic: Obesity and Scenario in Bangladesh

Obesity and Scenario in Bangladesh

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Obesity and Scenario in Bangladesh

Introduction: Obesity means an excessive or abnormal fat accumulation that presents a health risk. The term obese specifies a person who is exceptionally overweight with a lot of body fat. Obesity is measured by the term- BMI or Body Mass Index. A BMI over 25 is considered as overweight, and over 30 as obese. According to the Global burden of disease, the issue has grown to epidemic proportions, with almost 4 million people dying each year because of being overweight or obese. The rates of obesity and overweight continue to grow in adults and children. The main cause of weight gain and obesity is the imbalance between the amount of calories we take in and the calories we burn.

Body Mass Index (BMI): Body Mass Index is a measurement of one's weight with respect to height. It is a way of measuring whether a person's weight or body fat is higher than what is considered a healthy weight for a given height. BMI is measured by: calculating a person's weight in kilograms, then dividing that weight by the person's height in meters squared (kg/m^2). Mathematically written as, $\text{BMI} = \text{weight}(\text{kg}) / \text{height}(\text{meter})^2$. BMI fat indicator chart is given below:

BMI	Weight Status
Less than 18.5	Underweight
18.5-24.9	Normal (healthy weight)
25-29.9	Overweight
30 plus	Obese

Causes of Obesity: There are so many reasons for being overweight or obese. Such as,

1. Unhealthy food habits: This is one of the main reasons for obesity. Unhealthy food habits store a lot of fats and bad cholesterol in the body.
2. Inactivity or inadequate physical exercise: Due to inadequate physical exercise, calories can't be burnt enough. As a result, fats and bad stuff remain stored in the body.
3. Changes in sleeping habits: Not getting enough sleep or too much sleep can cause hormonal changes that can increase appetite. Besides, it can hamper the natural digestive system of the body.
4. Certain diseases and medical problems: Certain diseases such as Cushing's syndrome, hypothyroidism, and Prader-Willi syndrome, and some medical problems like arthritis, thyroid can also lead to decreased activity, which may result in weight gain.
5. Certain medications: Some medications can lead to weight gain. These include some antidepressants, anti-seizure medications, and diabetes medications, as well as certain types of contraceptives.
6. Family history of obesity: Family history of obesity can also cause one's obese.
7. Pregnancy: Pregnancy also causes obesity for a certain period of time.

Obesity prevalence in Bangladesh: Bangladesh is a huge populous country associated with various kinds of problems. Obesity is one of the unseen major problems, so usually, it does not come to light. A study led by the Imperial College of London and the World Health Organization established experts' conception that Bangladesh is facing the 'dual burden' of obesity and malnutrition as well. The study calculated body mass index (BMI) among adults, adolescents, and children from 1975 to 2016. The increasing rates in children are especially alarming as children are not fully developed physically and are more vulnerable; childhood obesity can cause major chronic complications further in life. From 1975 to 2016, the prevalence of obese or overweight children and adolescents aged 5–19 years increased more than four-fold from 4% to 18% globally.

Another study conducted in Dhaka also reported a high prevalence of general obesity (26.2%) and abdominal obesity (39.8%), and this rate was higher in women. In the last 14 years, obesity has increased nearly threefold among women, 1.5 times among men. In Bangladesh, 7% of adults and 3% of children were obese or overweight in 1980. In 2013, the rates had climbed to 17% for adults and 4.5% for children, according to IHME, The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation of the University of Washington. A research published in a journal named 'BMC Paediatrics' concluded that the rate of obesity and overweight is alarming among school-going children in urban areas in Bangladesh.

Global Obesity Observatory Report: According to the Global Obesity Observatory report 2018, 20.5% of adults in Bangladesh were overweight, and 5.4% among them were obese. But alarmingly, women were almost 3 times more obese than men. 8.6% of women were obese, and 25.1% were overweight, whereas men's percentage was only 2.3% and 16%.

Obesity prevalence

Adults, 2018

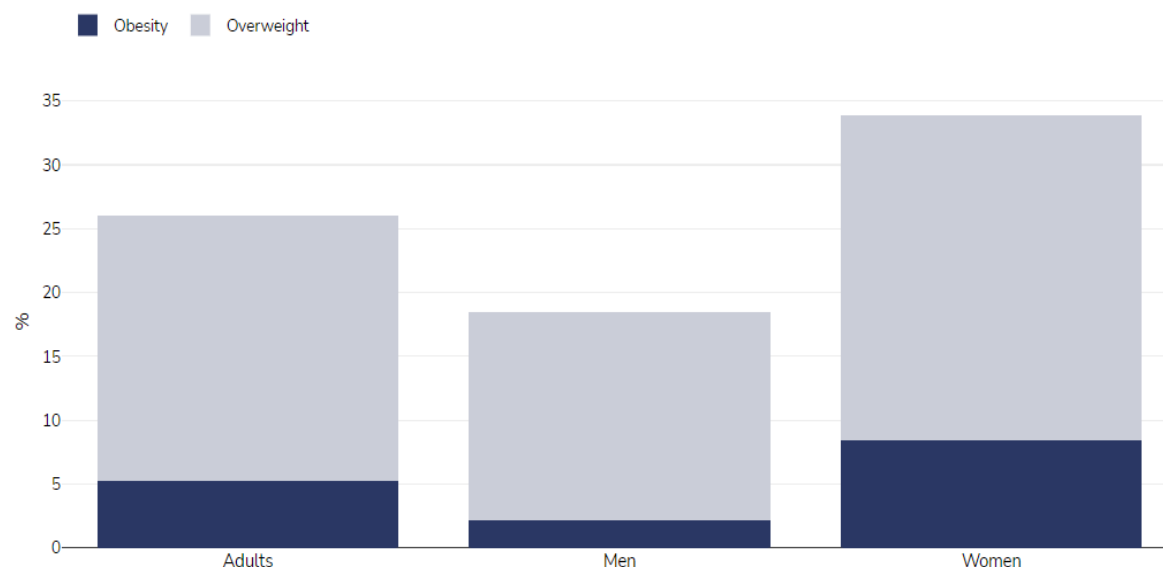


Diagram: Obesity Prevalence in Bangladesh, 2018

If we notice for a long period of time, the report shows that obesity or overweight in Bangladesh has raised up to almost 16 times in adults from 1995 to 2017. In 1995, only 2.8% of adults had overweight or obese, but in 2017, it has raised to 32.4%, which is slowly becoming a reason of concern for public health experts. Besides, Bangladesh scores 7 out of 10 on the national obesity risk index, which means Bangladesh is currently at a high risk of obesity.

% Adults living with overweight or obesity, 1995-2018

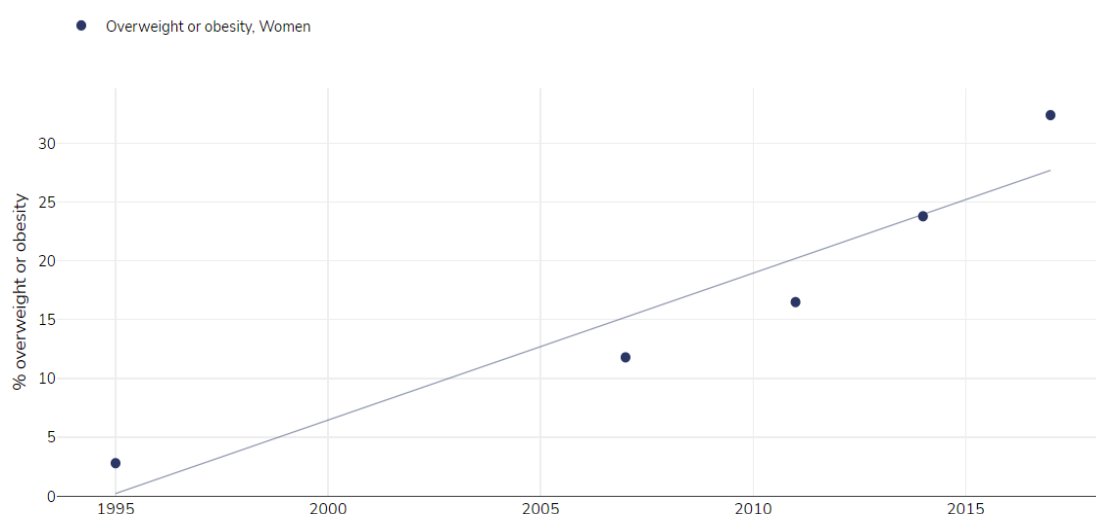


Diagram: % of Women living with obesity or overweight from 1995 to 2018

Prevalence (%) of adults with obesity and severe obesity 1995-2015

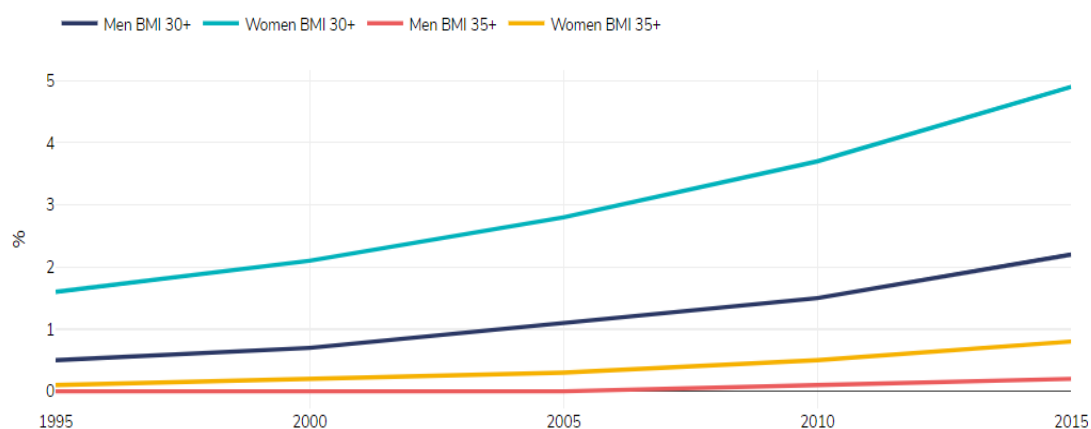
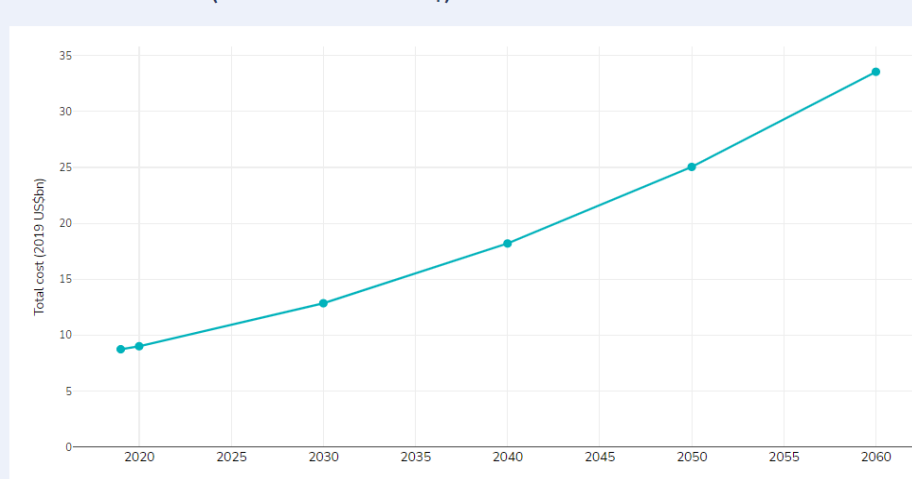


Diagram: % of adults with obesity and severe obesity from 1995 to 2015

Health Complications for Obesity: Obesity and overweight are linked to higher overall mortality as well as a higher chance of developing or dying from cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and several types of cancer. It happens by increasing blood cholesterol or triglycerides, high blood pressure, insulin resistance as well as hormone levels. Because of obesity, Hypertension rose from 31% to 44% in women and from 19% to 33% in men in our country. Hypertension and diabetes are more prevalent in richer households. Other complications are- Fatigue and lack of energy, Shortness of breath, Difficulty sleeping, Back and joint pain, Chronic kidney disease, Psychological problems like low self-esteem, lack of confidence, and feeling isolated, which may lead to depression.

Economic burden of obesity: Obesity also causes a large economic burden on families and individuals in the form of lost productivity and missed opportunities for economic growth as a result of missed workdays, lower productivity at work, death, and permanent disability. The global economic impact of obesity in 2014 was about to be \$2.0 trillion. In Bangladesh, in 2019, the economic impact of obesity was estimated to be US\$2.58 billion, according to the Global Obesity Observatory report. A research published in 2020 by the Cambridge University Press said the total cost attributable to obesity in Bangladesh in 2010 was estimated at \$147.38 million. According to WHO, over two-thirds or an estimated 550000 people in Bangladesh die every year because of non-communicable diseases like cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, COPD, cancer, and mental health problems. This means obesity is becoming a threat day by day.

Total economic cost (in billions of 2019 US\$)



Prevention: There is a said that prevention is better than cure. Prevention from the beginning is the most helpful way to stay healthy; The same goes for obesity. Whether we are at risk to become obese, currently overweight, or at a healthy weight, we should take the necessary steps to stop unhealthy weight gain and associated health issues. The steps to prevent obesity are as like as the steps of losing weight, and these include:

1. Daily exercise: According to the American College of Sports Medicine, we should do moderate-intensity activity or physical exercises for about 150 to 300 minutes a week to prevent weight gain. Moderately intense physical activities, including fast walking and swimming.
2. Maintaining a healthy, well-balanced diet: This can be achieved by focusing on low-calorie foods, vitamins, and nutrient-dense foods like vegetables, fruits, and whole grains, as well as avoiding saturated fat, sweets, and alcohol. It is essential to choose foods that promote a healthy weight and good health.
3. Closely monitoring what we eat or drink on a long-term basis.

Conclusion: Obesity is not only a problem in Bangladesh; in fact, it is a global problem. From the above discussion, we've learned how dangerous can obesity be. Its iniquity may not be seen with open eyes, but it slowly creates a lot of complications to health, taking a long period of time. Moreover, the recent trend of obesity among the Bangladeshi young generation is very high. Due to the influence of the western lifestyle, and the internet, children are more likely to consume fast food and other junk foods frequently. Physical activity at work, walking, and bicycling used to be significant contributors to total energy expenditure but have unfortunately declined dramatically in urban societies. The impact of obesity is really alarming. Now, it is time we should be conscious and raise awareness regarding obesity to save our future generations. The government should also be sincere in taking the necessary steps. Already they are providing some 1 lakh hypertension patients in 54 Upazilas medicines free of cost and also raising awareness, and it should be continued. By these ways, we can live a long and healthy life preventing obesity.

Recommendations:

1. *Eat healthy foods and maintain a well-balanced diet.*
2. *Sleep early at night and wake up early in the morning.*
3. *Drink a lot of water.*
4. *Do some activity or physical exercises for at least 30/40 minutes daily.*
5. *Do not take stress or pressure.*
6. *Avoid fast foods and unhealthy stuffs.*
7. *Do not take medicines without a doctor's consultation.*
8. *Raise awareness among the people regarding obesity.*

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