

# Obesity and Malnutrition; Root Cause of All Diseases

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## Short Communication

The most overlooked 'diseases' of modern times are malnutrition and obesity. They have long been regarded as factors impairing health, but have yet to be the primary focus of physicians. According to the World Health organization, worldwide more than 1.9 billion adults are overweight and 462 million are underweight. The body mass index (BMI) is the most widely used method to define under and overweight, due to its simplicity and accuracy in predicting morbidity and mortality. Generally, a normal BMI is considered from 18.5 to 25 [1].

Malnutrition is commonly used interchangeably with the term underweight and is associated with male sex, age above 60 years, recent weight loss, cancer, chronic diarrhea, upper gastrointestinal diseases, solitary living and low education status [2]. Risk factors for obesity are female gender, increasing age till 60 years, living in urban areas, being educated, high socioeconomic status and high intake of meat [3]. Obesity is associated with hypertension, heart failure, hypercholesterolemia, diabetes, cholelithiasis, and cancer, sleep and breathing disorders [3].

Obesity and malnutrition are easily identifiable due to the obvious external manifestations. However, physicians often do not recognize them or do not give due importance, which further worsens patients' conditions [4]. Hospitals and clinics are the ideal settings to combat these problems. On admission of a new patient, most hospitals do not measure the weight and height of a patient. A screening program should be introduced to immediately identify underweight and obese patients using BMI. Apart from preventing a number of medical problems, a healthy BMI also decreases the morbidity and mortality, complications,

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and length of hospital stay of the inpatient population [2, 5]. Adequate nutrition and exercise advice should be given to the patients, with involvement of a nutritionist if needed. During subsequent follow-ups for the presenting complaints, the BMI should be monitored and treated. Most physicians do counsel their patients regarding other disease-causing risk factors like smoking, alcohol intake, illicit drugs and sexual promiscuity; however, it is surprising that hardly any focus on obesity and malnutrition. It is about time that we add these two to the list and work actively to reduce their incidence.

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