



Is Obesity a Health Problem in Cuba?

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ABSTRACT The study describes the current problem of obesity and its trends as part of the nutrition transition in Cuba. Data on food consumption and dietary habits were obtained from Cuban reports to FAO and the Institute of Nutrition. Information on the prevalence of overweight and obesity was obtained from local surveys and from the 2001 National Survey on Risk Factors and Preventive Actions. As compared to the 1990s, food availability increased as well as total energy per capita supply. Carbohydrates as a source of energy remained high. Food choice revealed a lower preference of fruit and vegetables and high preference of fat and sugar energy-dense diet. Prevalence of overweight increased since the 1960s and kept that pace until the 1990s, when the sudden shortage of food, fuel and essential supplies provoked a reduction of energy and essential foods. However, after the economic revitalization, energy intake increased physical activity decreased and overweight increased as well. Figures in 2001 show a remarkable number of overweight people in urban areas all over the country, but higher in the western provinces. The current nationwide strategy to prevent overweight and obesity is part of the Public Health System approach to prevent non-communicable diseases morbidity and mortality. Obesogenic factors are dealt with as part of this strategy and high-risk groups are targeted in a selective way. Cuban nutrition transition shows remarkable differences when compared to other Latin American countries

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