

Obesity also rising in Singapore



The last National Health Survey in 2010 found that 11 per cent of adults here aged between 18 and 69 were obese, up from 7 per cent in 2004. PHOTO: ST FILE

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Obesity, which has become a weighty problem worldwide, is also on the rise in Singapore.

The last National Health Survey in 2010 found that 11 per cent of Singaporean adults aged between 18 and 69 were obese, up from 7 per cent in 2004.

While the percentage of obese individuals here is lower than that in other countries, obesity is still a concern considering the growing number of obese people here, Mr Chan Joy Seng, director and nutritionist at Alive Nutrition Consultancy, told The Straits Times.

The number of people globally with a body mass index (BMI) of over 30 has risen from 105 million in 1975 to 641 million in 2014, The Lancet journal reported this week.

Obesity increases a person's risk of developing chronic conditions such as diabetes and heart disease.



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Mr Chan said research shows that Asians are more prone to chronic conditions at a lower BMI compared with others.

In Singapore, the healthy BMI range is between 18.5 and 22.9, while the World Health Organisation defines the healthy range from 18.5 to 24.9.

BMI may be a good indicator of weight, but is not applicable for special groups such as muscular athletes.

Waist circumference could also be used to supplement BMI readings, Mr Chan said. For Asian women, a healthy waist circumference is 80cm and below, while for Asian men, the threshold is 90cm.

Professor Eric Finkelstein of the Duke-NUS Medical School said that the main causes of obesity are cheap food and technology, which allows people to become increasingly sedentary.

Weight management is about energy balance, the Health Promotion Board said on its website.

Consuming more energy - or calories from food - than necessary will lead to weight gain, while burning more energy than you consume will lead to weight loss.

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