

Committee: Health committee
Subject: Obesity
Author: China

As obesity is related to unhealthy eating and low levels of physical activity, its worldwide increase is due to changes in society, specially to a global shift in diet towards increased intake of calories-filled foods that are high in fat and sugar but low in healthy micronutrients, and a trend towards decreased physical activity levels due to the increasingly sedentary nature of many forms of recreation, changing means of transportation, and developing urbanization.

The obesity epidemic in our country may also have its roots in the prevailing social attitudes towards body size. In Chinese culture, there is still a widespread belief that excess body fat represents health and prosperity. This is perhaps a consequence of China's recent history, where famine and chronic malnutrition caused the deaths of millions of people in the 1950s.

Coinciding with China's growing modernization are a decrease in physical activity and a less intense workload in both urban and rural areas. People are expending less energy on traditional means of transportation such as walking and cycling, and the popularity of cars, buses, and motorcycles is increasing. Data from the national statistics bureau show that the number of cars produced in China went from 5400 in 1980 to over 2 million in 2003—almost all of which are sold in China. Furthermore, the lack of infrastructure dedicated to promoting physical activity in inner cities that promote physical activity has meant that it has become more and more difficult to find safe places in residential areas to exercise or even walk.

As we all know, on the long term, obesity leads to a reduced life expectancy because of some associated health problems such as heart diseases, diabetes, obstructive sleep apnea, certain types of cancer, and osteoarthritis.

Since initiating market reforms in 1978, China has shifted from a centrally planned to a market based economy and experienced rapid economic and social development. Globalization played its role; the living conditions of the Chinese population changed drastically with a rapid urbanization, higher inequality and the dropping prices of all products with the liberalization of the economy, including food (most generally “fast food”). Over the past two decades, rates of adult and childhood obesity in the most developed areas have risen sharply: we have to recognize that about one fifth of the one billion overweight or obese people in the world are Chinese.

China declares that urgent public health strategies are needed to prevent obesity; our country is determined to fight against this epidemic, that has expanded in a remarkably short time, to prevent any further increase.

Our party offers a new sustainable plan to promote nutritional health, through creating a healthy school environment, introducing a mass media campaign, and creating new laws and fiscal policies to encourage the consumption of healthier food products.