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National Nutrition Mission (Poshan Abhiyaan) to Eradicate Obesity in India: Way Forward

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Opinion

Obesity is a medical condition in which a human's body fat has accumulated atypically or excessively, resulting in detrimental health repercussions. Obesity and overweight have long been regarded to be a concern of developed nations, but the problem is increasingly spreading to low and middle income nations. Obesity causes more deaths than being underweight and is a potential risk factor for non-communicable disease such as cardiovascular disorders, musculoskeletal diseases, diabetes, and tumors.¹ Obesity in children leads to lung disorders, osteoporosis, hypertension, and mental issues. Obesity can cause disability and untimely mortality in later life, especially in case of a high risk of diabetes and cardiovascular disease.²

The prevalence of overweight people in Indians is significantly higher than the national average. Between 2010 and 2040, the incidence of overweight will almost double among Indian people aged 20 to 69, while the rate of obesity

would triple. By 2040, the prevalence of overweight and obesity in males will reach 30.5% and 9.5%, accordingly, and 27.4% and 13.9% in females. Overweight and obesity are anticipated to rise at a faster rate in older people between 2010 and 2040 than in younger people.³

Despite years of research, the processes that cause people to gain increased body weight and obesity are still only incompletely understood. India is on the verge of a food crisis, as well as an obesity, diabetes, and other non-communicable diseases linked to poor nutrition.^{4,5} Obesity is on the rise in the India, and it's predicted mostly due to unhealthy diets, excessive salt, sugar, and fat, especially trans-fat.⁶ In India, malnutrition, undernutrition, and overnutrition are all present at the same time. Now in COVID-19, many people are staying home leading to increased chances for obesity because of lack of physical exercise. As a result, when it comes to addressing the issue of obesity in India, a new strategy is required.⁷

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In the current situation, the individual's responsibility for healthy habits and results obviously extends across him or her. Individual actions and activities, and eventually medical outcomes, are influenced by a variety of factors, including knowledge acquisition, opinions, and values, as well as familial impacts and social networks, behavioral contexts and groups, and social standards and related legislation. Despite the importance of each of these domains, government involvement and legislation are particularly significant in modifying behavioral preferences, influencing social practices, and increasing access to evidence-based treatment.

Obesity is an issue in India, according to India's major nutrition initiative, Poshan Abhiyaan, commonly known as the National Nutrition Mission (NNM), which was launched in 2018. The goal of the Poshan Abhiyaan is to decrease stunting in India's most malnourished regions by increasing the use of important Anganwadi services and enhancing the quality of Anganwadi care provision. Its goal is to guarantee that pregnant women, mothers, and children receive enough nourishment. According to Poshan Abhiyan's third annual report, the nation must marshal strong efforts to confront the rising and cross-cutting concerns of urbanization and overweighted-obesity (O-O).

The month of September 2018 is Rashtriya Poshan Maah (National Nutrition Month which is centered on social behavioral change and communication (SBCC). Fetal monitoring, optimum nursing, breast feeding, anemia, growth monitoring, girls' schooling, nutrition, marrying at the ideal age, hygiene practices, and consuming healthily - food fortification are some of the primary concerns covered under the Poshan Maah strategy. After the program's approved timeframe has finished, the outcomes of the Poshan Abhiyaan may be evaluated. Meanwhile, according to UNICEF's Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey (CNNS), the prevalence of stunting, squandering, and underweight among children is 34.7%, 17%, and 33.4%, accordingly, which is also

an enhancement and decrease from the National Family Health Survey level-4.⁸

In addition to Poshan Abhiyan, the government of India started the 'Eat Right' campaign in 2017 under the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India. With its emphasis on preventative and promotive healthcare and flagship initiatives like Ayushman Bharat, Anemia Mukht Bharat, and Swacch Bharat Mission, Eat Right India is associated with the National Health Policy 2017. The program aims to influence people's attitudes and behaviors regarding food standards and nourishment at school, home, workplace, and on the go. Additional purpose is to reduce high-fat, high-sugar, and high-salt meals in the diet; and Food Fortification, which promotes the addition of vital minerals and vitamins to five staple foods-wheat flour, milk, rice, oil, and salt to boost their nutritional value.

Obesity is still a problem in India, however it is an one that cannot be disregarded. A persistent, multi-sectoral approach encompassing the public, business, healthcare professional and non-governmental organizations is required to successfully tackle this complicated problem. To counteract the burgeoning obesity pandemic, immediate action is required. To combat the obesity pandemic, India should collaborate with the private sector. While some acknowledgment has begun to emerge, far more exposure and awareness is still required.

The Obesity Policy Action (OPA) framework, which was customized from the World Health Organization concept and practice of the Global Strategy on diet, physical activity, and health, illustrates the necessity of the multi-level policies by the government that encourage healthy nutritional products and services in the market and underlines the ways to combat non-communicable diseases, should be incorporated into India's national programs. In order to combat obesity and overweight, India cannot stand up only with the take-home rations and midday meals, but there is lot to do to eradicate the obesity epidemic successfully.


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