PREVALENCE OF OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY IN 8 TO 15 YEAR-OLD CHILDREN IN SIDI-BEL-ABBES, ALGERIA

M.B. Khaled, M. Diaf

Djillali Liabes University of Sidi Bel Abbes Faculty of Sciences, Sidi Bel Abbes, Algeria

Introduction: The prevalence of childhood obesity has been dramatically increasing worldwide. This study was performed to estimate the prevalence of overweight and obesity in school children age 8 to 15 years in Sidi-Bel-Abbes (north-western region of Algeria).

Methods: A cross-sectional study was performed from February through May 2008 on 428 school children (218 boys and 210 girls) aged 8-15 years in the urban area of Sidi-Bel-Abbes. Their height and weight were measured and body mass index (BMI) was calculated. Overweight, obese and underweight were defined using three different international reference values for BMI: the International Obesity Task Force cut-offs to define overweight and obesity, the French references to define thinness and overweight (3rd and 97th percentiles, respectively) and the Centre for Disease Control 2000 references to define thinness, overweight and obesity (5th, 85th and 95th percentiles respectively).

Results: According to the IOTF, French and CDC references, the overall prevalence rates of overweight was 7.94, 7.71 and 7.23%, respectively. Obesity affected 3.73, 3.73 and 4.43%, respectively. Underweight was found in 3.96 and 8.17% of children according to the French and CDC references. Girls had a higher prevalence of overweight than boys did at all ages, while boys had a higher prevalence of obesity.

Conclusion: The prevalence rate of overweight and obesity in Algerian children is considered to be high. This is a major public health problem requiring preventive intervention to avoid future health consequences in adulthood.