

- Body weight / Obesity

Maintain optimal weight to stay healthy

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OBESITY is still a global health issue during this Covid-19 pandemic.

In conjunction with World Obesity Day 2022, we should be aware that the global prevalence of obesity has increased three-fold since 1975 and the number is still escalating presently.

In Malaysia, according to the National Health and Morbidity Survey 2019, every one out of two adults is overweight or obese.

It is anticipated that the rates of overweight and obesity will surge further as the Covid-19 pandemic may restrict the public's mobility, which reduces their physical activities.

Obesity is a condition with excessive accumulation of fat that predisposes individuals to cardiometabolic diseases.

The fat tissue in the human body is supposed to be flexible and multifunctional.

Besides serving as an energy reservoir, the fat tissue is also responsible for:

secreting hormones that regulate many physiological processes; serving as a hub for inflammatory responses;

providing mechanical cushioning and insulation; and

participating in heat production for the regulation of body temperature.

However, obesity will lead to a decline in adipose-tissue flexibility and thus may cause fibrosis and inflammation.

These sub-pathological changes impair adipose tissue's critical nutrient-buffering functions, leading to insulin resistance and other diseases such as type 2 diabetes, stroke, and coronary artery disease.

Although obesity is reversible through dietary monitoring and physical activity, weight management during a pandemic is challenging.

To overcome obesity during the Covid-19 pandemic, we need to factor in life stressors such as stress and anxiety that can negatively impact our eating behaviours.

For instance, employees who work from home are more likely to be sedentary or may increase snacking of junk foods resulting in weight gain.

Therefore, individuals who work from home should control stress eating, have a good stress management strategy, and try to make the home environment more assessable to healthy-eating conditions.

They should stock up on healthy foods like fruits and vegetables, lessen the oil, salt, and sugar contents while cooking at home. Prepare sufficient plain water for daily consumptions and prevent all kinds of snacks and junk food at home, in compliance with the latest Malaysian dietary guidelines 2020 during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and beyond.