

Epidemic of obesity, metabolic syndrome and diabetes

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Obesity is reaching epidemic proportions with recent worldwide figures estimated at 1.4bn and rising year-on-year. Obesity affects all socioeconomic backgrounds and ethnicities and is a prerequisite for metabolic syndrome. Metabolic syndrome is commonly defined by a group of risk factors (fasting blood sugars, triglycerides, high density lipoprotein, high blood pressure and abdominal obesity, high body mass index) and is closely associated with insulin resistance that markedly increase risk for both coronary heart disease and diabetes.

Abdominal adiposity appears to be a major driving force in metabolic syndrome and its increasing prevalence; adiposity is predictive of metabolic syndrome in population studies and is associated with a variety of metabolic derangements, including insulin resistance.

Nowadays we are finding worrying trend of an increase in number of youngsters with type 2 diabetes mellitus in our Hospital. Our sedentary life style along with long working hours and lack of exercise are important contributing factors to this syndrome, which is often underdiagnosed in the young population.

Further, increased use of gadget (social media, gaming) and fast food among the younger lot has led to more sedentary life and increasing prevalence of obesity in youth and even teenagers.

One worrying aspect is a relationship between metabolic syndrome and cancer in some studies. Metabolic syndrome has been associated with a plethora of cancers including breast, pancreatic, colon and liver cancer.

Lifestyle intervention with the goals of weight loss and increased exercise is a critical component of management aimed at preventing progression to diabetes and reducing cardiovascular risk. Lipid disorders, high blood sugars and high blood pressure in metabolic syndrome require aggressive management.

It is very important to raise awareness among our youth about this emerging epidemic of 21st century, which can be easily prevented by regular exercise, healthy food and good sleep.