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Overweight and obesity among 6-year olds in middle to high socio-economic schools in a Central South African City

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Objective: Weight status at age 6 years has been identified as an important predictor for overweight/obesity in adolescence, which in turn tracks into adulthood, increasing the risk for future metabolic diseases. This study aimed to describe the prevalence of overweight/obesity amongst 6 year olds in middle to high socio-economic schools in Mangaung, a medium-sized city in South Africa.

Design: A cross-sectional descriptive study.

Setting: Middle to high socio-economic primary schools, in Mangaung, South Africa.

Study population and sample: 99 randomly selected grade one children born in 2007.

Methods: Body mass index (BMI), and waist-to-height ratio (WHtR), were recorded.

Results: Based on BMI-for-age 24.2% were overweight/obese (10.9% of boys and 11.3% of girls were overweight; 10.9% of boys and 15.1% of girls were obese). WHtR was above normal in 16.2% (8.7% of boys; 22.6% of girls). WHtR correlated significantly with BMI ($R=0.8$; $p<0.0001$) in this sample.

Conclusion: Almost a quarter of 6 year olds in this study were overweight/obese. Parents need to be made more aware of future morbidities associated with excess weight at this age; and be empowered to prevent, recognise and appropriately address weight problems in their children.

Biography

Meko N M L has completed her PhD at the age of 30 years from the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of the Free State, RSA. She is a lecturer at the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics at the University. Her field of interest is in Community Nutrition and Overweight and Obesity prevention and management. She has presented papers at National and International conferences.

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