

Urgent action needed: obesity crisis predicted to impact 260 million by 2050

A new study in *The Lancet* reveals a worsening obesity epidemic in the USA, with devastating health, social, and economic consequences predicted. By 2050, over 260 million Americans—213 million adults and 43 million children and adolescents—are expected to live with overweight or obesity.

Obesity rates have doubled since 1990, and southern states like Mississippi, Texas, and Alabama currently face the highest levels. Among older adolescents (aged 15-24 years), over 50% of males in Texas and nearly 63% of females in Mississippi were affected in 2021. These trends are projected to worsen, with one in five children and two-thirds of adults living with obesity by 2050.

Experts warn of a rising burden of related conditions, including diabetes, heart disease, and mental health issues, as well as soaring healthcare costs. They call for urgent nationwide action, emphasising prevention over treatment. Proposed strategies include ensuring access to healthy foods, regulating junk food marketing, and promoting physical activity through safer neighborhoods and better school meal programs.

While medications like GLP-1 receptor agonists can help, they alone cannot solve this crisis. The study highlights the need for comprehensive policies addressing underlying issues like food deserts and social inequalities.

Lead author Professor Emmanuela Gakidou stresses, "Reversing this epidemic requires strong federal commitment and a whole system approach to disrupt the structural drivers of obesity and ensure a healthier future for all Americans."

This study underscores the urgent need for coordinated efforts to curb the obesity crisis and safeguard future generations.



WORLD PREMATURETY DAY

Access to quality care everywhere

DR ABDULLAHEL AMAAN & DR KHAINOOR ZAHAN

An estimated 13.4 million babies are born preterm (before 37 weeks of pregnancy) in the world. At such a tender stage, the organs inside the baby are not fully developed. Unfortunately, premature birth is one of the leading causes of death in children under five.

Preterm survivors also face lifelong health consequences, with an increased likelihood of disability and developmental delays. While more than 80 percent of preterm births occur in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, the problem is universal. About 75% of these deaths could be prevented if current interventions were used. Preventing deaths among babies born too soon is a major challenge for many countries.

Skin-to-skin contact has been proven to be extremely effective for every baby, especially for premature babies. Initiated right after birth, the practice of skin-to-skin contact contributes to the baby's awareness of touch and affection, playing a pivotal role in starting and sustaining breastfeeding. The

practice of skin-to-skin contact with the mother is linked to the development of emotions and memory and also favors oxytocin secretion, a hormone favoring breast milk secretion, minimising the mother's postpartum bleeding, and, of course, enhancing the bonding between mother and child.

Recent studies have revealed that skin-to-skin contact can and should be initiated immediately after birth, even before the newborn is considered clinically stable. Such contact improves thermal regulation, prevents infection, stimulates breast milk production, and yields positive physiological, behavioral, psychosocial, and neurodevelopmental effects while reducing the risk of neonatal mortality by 40 percent.

World Prematurity Day, observed annually on November 17, is a global movement to raise awareness of premature birth. Celebrating this day is an opportunity to raise global awareness of the challenges for women and babies associated with preterm birth and celebrates the lives of preterm infants. By observing World Prematurity Day, we can shed

light on the importance of providing care and raising awareness about the devastating effects of premature birth on the baby, the parents, and the family of the baby. Through this day, awareness about creating better healthcare and treatment opportunities can be sought for preterm babies to improve the outcomes of medical care given to them for their growth.

World Prematurity Day is a crucial platform to raise awareness about preterm birth challenges and their consequences, promote early detection during pregnancy, advance medical treatments, empower parents, and reduce long-term impacts on children and their families.

The typical socks line and purple lightings have become symbols of World Prematurity Day. The purple color in the visual identity stands for sensitivity and exceptionality.

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HAVE A NICE DAY Gross National Happiness Day

DR RUBAUL MURSHED

Gross National Happiness (GNH) Day was observed last Monday, November 11th. The GNH concept was first introduced by the Bhutanese King in the 1970s. GNH promotes a holistic approach to development, emphasising that well-being should be measured by economic growth and non-economic factors such as health, education, and environmental sustainability.

Using the Alkire-Foster method, the GNH Index is a unique tool that measures happiness across nine domains. Unlike GDP, which focuses solely on economic performance, GNH prioritises quality of life, offering a broader view of human fulfillment.



Cultural perceptions of happiness vary globally. In Denmark, the concept of 'hygge' reflects comfort and warmth, while Nordic countries consistently rank high in the World Happiness Report due to their solid social structures and trust.

Happiness within a country can also differ regionally, as seen in North America and Europe, where emotional expressions and personality traits vary widely. Bhutan's GNH model integrates material and spiritual development, aligning economic growth with environmental and cultural preservation. Bhutan's cultural values, rooted in the belief in 'karma,' encourage kindness and communal well-being, highlighting the profound link between virtuous living and happiness.

Kindness plays a critical role in happiness, with scientific studies showing that acts of kindness release feel-good chemicals like serotonin and dopamine, enhancing overall well-being. Japanese research further suggests that happier people are more inclined to be kind, reinforcing the connection between personal happiness and the desire to help others.

GNH Day reminds us that true happiness arises from a meaningful life and shared kindness and compassion that uplift society.

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The power of running

TASHIRIF AREFIN

Running is a simple, yet powerful exercise that benefits both body and soul. Understanding these benefits, along with practical tips for staying motivated, can help you maximise the health rewards of running.

Road running tops the list of popularities. A quick run in the morning will uplift your mood for the day. Sprinting, however, is another type of leg muscle workout, a short distance, typically a race from 100 to 400 meters. It mainly focuses on velocity, power, and technique. In contrast, jogging is a more relaxed, slow-paced form of running, often used to warm up the body and help in recovery and fitness. It is less intense and can be ideal for newbies to get started with. On the other hand, long-distance running, also known as a marathon, has been gaining a lot of public enthusiasm.

Running has always been improving your health in a finer way. Running increases oxygen levels in the blood, which allows more oxygen to enter into the muscles. A study in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* finds that even five to 10 minutes a day of low-intensity running is enough to extend your life by several years, compared with not running at all.

Although running can trim away some of your existing risk of cardiovascular disease. The combined effect of lifestyle, diet, and family history still contributes to your lifetime risk. The study also focused on a group of more than 55,000 men and women ages 18 to 100. About a quarter of them were runners. Over 15 years, those who ran just 50 minutes a week or fewer at a moderate pace were less likely to die from either cardiovascular disease or any cause, compared with those who did not run at all.

To your utter surprise, running has always been a huge hunger suppressant. This is likely because it improves mood, creating a positive cycle. When one runs, she or he burns energy, their mind feels more satisfied, and they are less likely to

overeat.

When so many benefits and well-beings of this simple exercise are on the table, one cannot just ignore it for good. Just a bit of willpower and dedication from a person can improve their quality of life, both physical and mental. To facilitate one with that, there is a new fitness culture on the run: marathons! Marathon events may not have had a long history in Bangladesh, but things have been moving fast.

If your mind is thinking of joining a run, there are some pieces of advice from experts for a head start. If you are a beginner, you should start with brisk walking, progress to jogging, and work up to running. You could run with a friend or join a local running club. Running clubs may offer competitive events. Most clubs have sessions designed for beginners through to advanced runners. You can put your running skills against others in fun runs or marathons.

Make sure you warm up and stretch thoroughly before you head out. Cool your body down with light stretches when you return. Make sure you have plenty of fluids and take a water bottle with you on your run to avoid cramps. Try to drink plenty of water before, during, and after any run. You can use apps or a smartwatch to track your runs. Even short progressions in time and speed are worth celebrating and will motivate you to keep going. Pay attention to any signs of discomfort or fatigue. Rest is just as important as running, so do not be afraid to take a day off when needed.

The great news is that whether you run for five minutes or 50, every step counts toward a healthier, longer life. The benefits of running start small but grow exponentially as you do more. While a little bit is good, adding more distance, speed, and frequency only amplifies the rewards. By taking small steps toward regular running, one can set the foundation for a lifelong habit that promotes a healthier, happier version of yourself. So, even if you are pressed for time, do not hesitate to lace up your shoes and get moving—every step counts.



Global diabetes rates surpass 800 million, highlighting widening inequalities

A global study published in *The Lancet* ahead of World Diabetes Day reveals that over 828 million adults worldwide were living with diabetes in 2022—a fourfold increase since 1990. Notably, 445 million adults aged 30 and older, or 59%, did not receive treatment, with most of these untreated cases in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

The study, led by the NCD Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC) and the WHO, highlights alarming disparities. Diabetes rates doubled globally from 1990 to 2022, with men increasing from 6.8% to 14.3% and women from 6.9% to 13.9%. LMICs experienced the sharpest rises, with Pakistan's female diabetes rate soaring from 9% to 30.9%. By contrast, many high-income countries saw stable or declining rates.

Treatment gaps have widened dramatically. For instance, in some sub-Saharan African nations, over 90% of people with diabetes remained untreated. India alone accounted for 133 million untreated cases, far exceeding China's 78 million, despite China's higher treatment coverage.

Experts urge immediate action to address these inequalities. Solutions include increasing diabetes screening, promoting healthy diets, and improving access to medications. Innovations like workplace health programs and extended clinic hours could boost diagnosis rates in LMICs.

This study underscores the critical need for coordinated global strategies to combat diabetes and improve treatment access.

WORLD AMR AWARENESS WEEK

Are you willing to "go blue for AMR"?

IFTEKHAR AHMED SAKIB

The World Health Organisation (WHO) declared that Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) is one of humanity's top 10 global public health threats. Although antimicrobial resistance emergence is a concern in all countries regardless of income level, low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), which included Bangladesh, bear a heavier burden.

Bangladesh is facing an accelerating crisis of antimicrobial resistance (AMR), where antibiotics are frequently overused or misused across healthcare and agriculture. In many communities, antibiotics are viewed as a quick fix, often taken without proper prescriptions. This misuse leads to the development of "superbugs," strains of bacteria that resist standard treatments, making infections harder—and sometimes impossible—to cure. For young people in Bangladesh, the AMR crisis threatens not just public health but also the future of effective medical care.

Already 700,000 deaths annually are attributed to AMR. The 2016 O'Neill Report suggested that, without prompt action, AMR could claim as many as 10 million lives annually by 2050—more than diabetes and cancer combined—with potential economic damage similar to that caused by the 2008 financial crisis.

Bangladesh celebrates World Antimicrobial Awareness Week every year to raise awareness of antimicrobial resistance worldwide and encourage best practices among the public, health workers, and policymakers to slow the development and spread of drug-resistant infections. However, I want to shed light on the 2022 celebrations. The Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA) and WHO Bangladesh initiated school activities to raise antimicrobial awareness among children. This included an art competition and comic book distribution among the students to make the audience understand the AMR with fun activities.

Utilising such creative steps as comics can play a pivotal role in engaging young students to communicate complex information on antimicrobial resistance in simple language. Through compelling storytelling and graphics, this method effectively raises awareness and promotes understanding of this important issue of antimicrobial resistance among the young students; the message will carry over to their families and promote awareness and health consciousness around AMR.

Health professional networks worldwide are mobilising themselves through different avenues in an attempt to empower future healthcare leaders and professionals to fight this emerging crisis. One such example is the International Federation of Medical Students Associations (IFMSA)'s organisation of the AMR Youth Summit on the margins of World Antimicrobial Awareness Week and in collaboration with the World Healthcare Student Alliance. The summit, supported by the IDEA Initiative at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, focuses on the role youth can play in tackling challenges presented by AMR through panel discussions with high-level speakers, competitions, article presentations, seminars, and training sessions.

Young Bangladeshis, as future doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and advocates, have the power to change this trajectory. However, the awareness campaigns are majorly within the walls of the medical colleges rather than community engagement. We need to explore how youths can take action to safeguard antibiotics and ensure Fleming's discovery continues to save lives for generations to come.

The battle against AMR is in our hands. So will we go blue to preserve the power of antibiotics or let this life-saving tool slip from our grasp? The answer lies in our commitment as the youth to a healthier tomorrow, starting with responsible actions today!

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