

# Obesity epidemic taking root in Africa

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The urban poor in sub-Saharan Africa are the latest victims of the obesity epidemic. Researchers writing in the open access journal *BMC Public Health* claim that overweight and obesity are on the increase among this group.

Abdhalah Ziraba worked with a team of researchers from the African Population and Health Research Center, Nairobi, Kenya, who used data from seven African countries to investigate changes in [body mass index](#) (BMI) between early 1990s and early 2000s. He said, "Despite being the least urbanized continent, Africa's population is becoming increasingly urban and its cities are growing at unprecedented rates. In spite of rampant poverty in urban areas, access to cheap foods with a high content of fat and sugar is commonplace".

The researchers found that the number of people overweight/obese increased by nearly 35% during the study period. Those of higher socio-economic status were more likely to be overweight or obese, but the rate of increase in obesity was higher in the poor group. According to Ziraba, "Given the chronic nature of most diseases associated with [obesity](#) and by extension the huge cost of treatment, the prospects look grim for the already under-funded and ill-equipped African [health](#) care systems unless urgent action is taken".

**More information:** Overweight and obesity in urban Africa: A problem of the rich or the poor? Abdhalah K Ziraba, Jean C Fotso and Rhoune Ochako, *BMC Public Health* (in press), [www.biomedcentral.com/bmcpublichealth/](http://www.biomedcentral.com/bmcpublichealth/)

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