

Obesity, diabetes threaten economic health: Saudi minister

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Obesity and diabetes threaten Gulf states' economic health as well as human wellbeing, Saudi Arabia's health minister has said, as the region struggles with the growing cost of the conditions.

The Gulf has a mounting problem with obesity, which is associated with diabetes.

With most Gulf citizens aged under 30, overweight people and diabetes "threaten the wealth of our society and that is the youth," Khaled al-Falih said Tuesday evening at the opening of an international conference about the two related health problems.

Cited by the Saudi Press Agency, Falih said 15-20 percent of people in Gulf countries suffer from diabetes.

Saudi experts have previously blamed urbanisation, addiction to smartphones, lack of exercise and the prevalence of fast food for [unhealthy lifestyles](#).

The minister cited a global study which put the cost of treating diabetes at \$500 billion (440 billion euros) in 2011, a figure set to reach \$750 billion by 2030.

"They take up so much financial cost and medical effort that could be better channeled towards achieving valuable medical goals in research and development of health services," Falih said.

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