

India says number of obese teens nearly doubles in five years

March 9 2016, by Nirmala George



Indian teenagers eat and drink outside a street food stall, in New Delhi, India Wednesday, March 9, 2016. India's health minister says the number of obese teenagers in the country has nearly doubled over the last five years, with economic growth fueling lifestyle changes including a fondness for fast food.(AP Photo/Manish Swarup)

As India gets wealthier, its children are getting fatter, with the number of obese teenagers nearly doubling in the last five years, according to the country's health minister.

Citing new national statistics, Minister Jagat Prakash Nadda said 29 percent of Indians aged 13 to 18 were counted as obese last year, compared with 16 percent in 2010. Experts on Wednesday blamed a growing fondness for [fast food](#) along with an increase in [sedentary activities](#).

"Earlier, children's diets in most Indian households included a lot of vegetables and lentils," said epidemiologist Sutapa Agarwal from the Public Health Foundation of India. "But families have started eating out more often, and when they do, it's all pizzas and burgers and fries."

Meanwhile, the country is still struggling with one of the world's highest numbers of malnourished children. Hundreds of millions of people live in poverty with under \$2 a day.

Nadda also raised an alarm about a related rise in diabetes among people aged 20-79, telling lawmakers Tuesday that the 2015-16 National Family Health Survey revealed more than 69 million registered cases, compared with 66.8 million the previous year and 65 million the year before that. The full survey results have not yet been released.

The International Diabetes Foundation has estimated that India could have 123 million cases of diabetes by 2040.

Rising incomes have boosted the middle class and increased demand for vehicles and other consumer products, while leading to a proliferation of Western-style fast food chains in cities.

New Delhi residents are eating about 20 percent more fat and 40 percent more sugar than they did 60 years ago, according to the Indian Medical Association.

Doctors also blame increasingly sedentary lifestyles, with more time

sitting in cars, watching TV and working or playing on computers rather than going outside.

"Screen time has increased so much. Even 2-year-olds are playing with mobile phones and tablets," Agarwal said. Increasing [air pollution levels](#) also lead some parents to keep their children indoors.

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