

Short Commentary on Women's Normal Weight Obesity in Various Countries

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DESCRIPTION

Obesity is commonly diagnosed worldwide based on the Body Mass Index (BMI), which is calculated using height and weight. The BMI is also used in Japan as an indicator of body shape: BMI <18.5 kg/m² is considered thin, 18.5 kg/m² ≤ BMI <25.0 kg/m² as the standard, and BMI ≥ 25.0 kg/m² as obese. A higher proportion of Japanese young women are considered thin (BMI<18.5 kg/m²) compared with those in other developed countries: 22.3% of women aged 20–29 years are thin. Excessive dieting due to a strong desire to lose weight may put young women at risk of anemia, menstrual abnormalities, and eating disorders due to under-nutrition. Fetal development has been reported to be affected and onset of adult diseases was reportedly observed among adolescents who experience pregnancy and childbirth in the future. After menopause, complications such as osteoporosis and associated bone fractures may occur and should be addressed.

While thinness in young women is considered a problem, there is also growing concern regarding Normal-Weight Obesity (NWO), a condition in which the BMI is in the normal range, but the body fat percentage is high. NWO in young women is caused by decreased muscle and bone mass and increased body fat mass because they only care about the calories in their diet owing to a strong desire to lose weight leading to a poor-quality diet. NWO increases the risk of developing cardiovascular diseases and death. However, body composition is not measured during routine health checkups. Therefore, identifying the health risks associated with this condition is important. Although associations between build and food/nutrients have been reported in young women using BMI as an indicator, a few studies have taken body fat percentage into account.

Therefore, we investigated the difference in nutrient intake between two groups classified using the BMI and body fat percentage: A standard group with 18.5 kg/m² ≤ BMI<25.0 kg/m²

and 20%<body fat percentage<30% and an NWO group with 18.5 kg/m² ≤ BMI<25.0 kg/m² and body fat percentage ≥ 30%. The results revealed that 24% of young Japanese women had a normal weight (18.5 kg/m² ≤ BMI<25.0 kg/m²) but a body fat percentage of 30% or more (NWO). Young Japanese women with NWO are characterized by low fat and saturated fatty acid intake and high carbohydrate intake [1].

Similarly, we investigated differences in eating habits based on body shape using the BMI and body fat percentage in young Thai women. The results revealed that 46.8% of young Thai women had standard weight but with NWO. We found that young Thai women with NWO were characterized by the use of a high frequency of ultra-processed food and added sugar beverage intake [2].

As excessive accumulation of body fat is a risk factor for numerous diseases, including lifestyle-related diseases, such as diabetes, lipid metabolism disorders, hypertension, and myocardial disease, both body weight and fat should be considered in diagnosing obesity. In addition to dietary habits, other factors contributing to NWO in young women should be examined in detail, including dietary behavioral patterns, exercise habits, and physical activity levels. In addition, NWO in young women should be investigated in other countries and regions, and presenting specific strategies for the management of NWO in each region is important.

REFERENCES

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