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## Causes and Consequences of Obesity

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**ABSTRACT** Obesity, simply defined, is the state of being excessively overweight. It afflicts a significant and possibly growing proportion of people in developed as well as developing societies. It has emerged as the most prevalent serious public health problem of the new millennium. Obesity may not be regarded simply as a cosmetic problem affecting certain individuals, but a crisis that threatens global well being. An estimated 300 million people around the world are obese. The International Obesity Task Force (IOTF) conservative estimates, based on current trends, show that obesity levels will continue to rise in the early 21st century - with severe health consequences - unless urgent action is taken now. It is half a century since obesity was introduced into the international classification of diseases. In the 21st century it has become an epidemic. Obesity levels in some countries have doubled in recent years and are rising in developing countries too. Several factors may contribute to the development of obesity. Obesity develops over time and, once it develops, is difficult to treat. Certain detrimental effects to health are attributed to obesity. Obesity is clearly associated with hypertension, hypercholesterolemia, NIDDM, and excess of certain cancers and other medical problems. The risk to health increases with the degree of obesity. The consequences of ignoring obesity are increasing levels of serious illness and rising health costs. Obesity research efforts should be directed toward elucidation of biologic markers, factors regulating the regional distribution of fat, studies of energy regulation, and studies utilizing the techniques of anthropology, psychiatry, and the social sciences.