

News and Information

WHO Global Database on Body Mass Index (BMI): an interactive surveillance tool for monitoring nutrition transition

The WHO Global Database on Body Mass Index (BMI) is now available on line at <http://www.who.int/bmi/index.jsp> (directly) or <http://www.who.int/nutrition/en/> (through the WHO Nutrition homepage).

The Database provides both national and sub-national adult underweight, overweight and obesity prevalence rates by country, year of survey and gender. The information is presented interactively as maps, tables, graphs and downloadable documents.

It was initiated as part of WHO's commitment to implementing the recommendations of the WHO Expert Consultation on Obesity: Preventing and Managing the Global Epidemic (Geneva, 3–5 June 1997), which identified the lack of nationally representative cross-sectional data as an obstacle for facilitating international comparisons of adulthood obesity rates, monitoring the magnitude of the current and future obesity problems, and evaluating the effectiveness of intervention strategies. During the last four years, the Database has evolved, in close collaboration with FAO, as a global interactive surveillance tool to monitor nutrition transition, covering and reporting on the entire spectrum of adult nutritional status.

This unique surveillance system also incorporates food availability data from the FAOSTAT Database, thereby providing a valuable contribution to an ongoing inter-agency work on monitoring food insecurity and vulnerability which was developed as follow-up to the World Food Summit (Rome, 1996). The Dietary Energy Supply (DES) data are displayed in conjunction with the BMI data on the maps and in the charts. DES figures are produced by FAO based on Food Balance Sheets (FBS).

The further development of the Database is underway. These include:

- Enhancement of underweight data.
- Addition of global and regional estimates.
- Further development of food consumption data.
- Incorporation of data for school-aged children and adolescents as part of the preparatory work for developing a growth reference for these age groups.

Contact address:

World Health Organization
Department of Nutrition for Health and Development
(NHD)
The WHO Global Database on BMI

20 Avenue Appia
CH-1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland
Fax: +41 22 791 4156
Email: bmidata@who.int

DOI: 10.1079/PHN2006967

Nutrition-Friendly Schools Initiative (NFSI)

Nutrition-related health problems in children are increasingly significant causes of disability and premature death worldwide. While undernutrition continues to be a major problem in many developing countries, the problem of overweight and obesity have reached epidemic proportions globally, and both developed and developing countries are seriously affected. In some countries, the epidemic of obesity sits alongside continuing problems of undernutrition, creating a double burden of nutrition-related ill-health among the population, including children.

Based on the principle that effectively addressing the increasing global public health problem of the double burden of nutrition-related ill-health requires common policy options, the Nutrition-Friendly Schools Initiative (NFSI) has been developed as follow-up to the WHO Expert Meeting on Childhood Obesity (Kobe, 20–24 June 2005).

The main aim of the NFSI is to provide a framework for designing integrated school-based intervention programmes which address the double burden of nutrition-related ill-health, building on and interconnecting the ongoing work of various agencies and partners. These include the FRESH Initiative, Essential Package (UNICEF/WFP), Child-Friendly Schools (UNICEF), Health Promoting Schools (WHO), School Food and Nutrition Education programmes (FAO) to mention just a few. NFSI applies the concept and principles of the Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI).

Improving the nutritional status of school-aged children is an effective investment for the future generation. Pre-schools and schools offer many opportunities to promote healthy dietary and physical activity patterns for children, and are also a potential access point for engaging parents and community members in preventing child malnutrition in all its forms (i.e. undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and obesity and other nutrition-related chronic diseases). The universality of the school setting for gaining access to children makes it highly relevant to global efforts to combat the increasing public health problems of the double burden of nutrition-related ill-health.