

Overweight and Obesity in Children

I read with interest the recent article(1) on obesity in affluent adolescent girls in Chennai. The prevalence of obesity and overweight among adolescent girls were found to be 6% and 10% respectively. I am worried that these figures may under-represent the real figures. The sample size included only one school and that may not be representative of the entire adolescent population. Relatively lower figures of obesity may also be due to the fact that they studied only girls.

The prevalence of obesity has been found to be lower among girls (6%) as compared to boys (8%) in an earlier study(2). A recent study done by Nutrition Foundation of India among 5000 children aged 4-18 years in a Delhi private school found that 29% of them

were overweight with a body mass index above 25(3). These studies point towards the fact that obesity among children in India has become a public health problem (prevalence >5%).

Sudhir Kumar,

*Department of Neurological Sciences,
Christian Medical College Hospital,
Vellore, Tamilnadu-632 004, India.
E-mail: drsudhirkumar@yahoo.com*

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What Should Mothers be Counselling About the Care of a Child's Foreskin?

"Cleanliness is next to godliness", said Mahatma Gandhi. However, in India there is a dearth of knowledge both among the medical fraternity and the lay public when it comes to the care of a child's foreskin. Poor penile hygiene can lead to balanitis, balanoposthitis and ascending urinary tract infections. Very rarely, it can even result in childhood penile cancer(1). Non-retractile foreskin, balanoposthitis and smegma collection comprises a significant number of referrals by pediatricians and general practitioners to

pediatric surgical centers. A good number of children are referred for accumulation of "pus" between the glans and the foreskin. Although some foreskins do not become fully retractable until late childhood, in 90% of uncircumcised males, it becomes so by the age of 3 years, when keratinisation of subpreputial epithelium is completed.

Routine circumcision in neonates and infants is unnecessary in any case for medical reasons. However, inability to retract the foreskin and keep the area clean runs the risk of smegma collection and inflammation from infection of inadequately cleaned secretions. Chronic posthitis later in life can lead to adhesions between the glans and prepuce