

Good example of promoting healthy lifestyles to fight obesity in kuwait research ...

[Nutrition](#), [Fast Food](#)



Introduction

Obesity is the body condition in which a person's body weight is at least twenty percent higher than his or her normal body weight. Conversely, an individual is said to be obese if the ratio of his weight and height (also known as Body mass Index, BMI) is 30 and above. Wealthy lifestyles lead to obesity in the developed countries today. According to the Arabian Gulf daily Kuwait Times dated May 29, 2014 Kuwait is ranked number 4 in terms of global obesity (" Kuwait Ranks No. 4"). Also the report claims that more than fifty percent of the female population of Kuwait is overweight. Researchers keep on warning that unabated increase in obesity may result in decreasing one's life expectancy. People with overweight are easily prone to diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular disease, osteoarthritis and even kidney disorders.

Consumption of excess fast foods and soft drinks coupled with lack of physical exercise results in obesity among children of Kuwait. Many studies have showed that obese children are more likely to become obese adults. Hence, checking childhood obesity is the key to address this problem on a sustainable manner. The two main reasons attributed for obesity problem in Kuwait are overeating associated with fast food, and sedentary lifestyle with no physical exercise. Besides, Kuwait culture has to do a lot with emphasizing eating during communal and social gatherings (" Kuwait Ranks No. 4). They believe that if one eats less at such gatherings, it would be interpreted as inefficiency or lack of hospitality on the part of the host. The dangerous trend growing among youngsters of Kuwait of late is treating obesity through the surgical procedure of stomach stapling rather than through healthier practices of right eating and exercising. Promoting healthy

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eating habits and regular exercising at gyms is the need of the hour to restore the health and life expectancy of Kuwaitis.

Weather and Climate Affecting the Life Styles

The climate of Kuwait is characterized with long summers and short winters, even though dry conditions prevail throughout the year. Exercising even in moderate temperature tends to raise the body temperature, and going for a running or exercising in a gym is a real challenge for anyone. Under such hot weather conditions, walking or a hectic exercise may prove deadly since the physical activity drastically disturbs the body's heat regulating system thereby putting one even at the risk of a heat stroke. Hence the extremely hot weather conditions in Kuwait discourage people from exercising on a regular basis. Thus running a gym may not be a good choice for medium and small investors, and obviously good quality gyms available in Kuwait charge huge sums. Also, unlike in western countries where people these days prefer to walk or ride bicycles to go to workplaces, in Kuwait people prefer to travel by air conditioned cars. Kuwait, being the country with the fifth biggest oil reserves in the world, the average per liter cost of petrol here is very less. Besides, the government of Kuwait also provides subsidies to petrol and the transport sector, which is very advantageous to the public. Though active exercising is the only possible means through which the body burns excess fat, which is abundantly present in popular Kuwaiti meals, not many Kuwaitis get the opportunity of walking in air conditioned surroundings, like they have in some malls these days. Reckless driving and fast vehicles on roads also discourage those aspiring to have a morning or late night walk by the

roadsides. Even the walk free areas are not being utilized properly because of the hot weather most of the time in Kuwait.

Fast Food – the Thriving Business in Kuwait

The fast economic growth of Kuwait, triggered by its rich oil reserves, has profoundly changed the lifestyles of the people. This has replaced the traditional eating habits of taking lot of whole grains, fruits and vegetables with high-calorie and fat-rich fast foods. Obviously Kuwait today is dotted with several restaurants and outlets of western fast foods. To tap the huge current fast food segment in Kuwait, global food chains are continuously entering the Kuwaiti market. Today, Kuwait continues to be the largest importer of food in the Middle East. According to local media, 91 percent of Kuwait's food requirement is met through overseas products. Interestingly, today Kuwait's second major consumer of gas apart from the energy sector is the food industry. Thus food industry helps Kuwait's dream of diversifying its economy to decrease its hydrocarbon dependency for sustaining the country's economy. Rapid westernization, Change in lifestyles and more number of women going to work are some of the reasons for the thriving of fast food industry in Kuwait.

Kuwaitis love socializing and have frequent family gatherings, and serving food is mandatory in the gatherings. For example, during the ceremony of Dewaniya, Kuwaiti men receive their colleagues and other male guests everyday at the reception area of their houses to discuss social and cultural issues. It is also the time to enjoy a variety of food items without any apparent physical activity. Popular entertainment in Kuwait, particularly to

the youth, is eating in restaurants. Kuwaitis love to eat outside and they dine out at least two or three times every week. Even in social gatherings they present a wide range of delicacies to show their social status. Kuwait is one of the countries with a richest per capita income (Menon). Most of the houses have latest advanced technology devices and house maids for help. Since the adverse climatic condition prevents them from going elsewhere they prefer to spend time at home, watching television, playing computer games or using the internet. Apart from this, the favorite outing place to an average Kuwaiti is the big shopping malls with family and friends, and enjoying the foods. Also, fast foods are much affordable in Kuwait, even for someone earning a modest living. Value fast foods, offering a group of fast foods at a cheaper price than the combined price of individual items when bought separately are popular in Kuwait. Convenient home and office delivery makes it still attractive (Menon).

Imparting Awareness on Healthy Lifestyles

Even as the present generation is blamed for the eating habits and sedentary life styles, it is the responsibility of the government and other institutions to impart awareness to the general public on the right and wrong practices of healthy living. Fast food in Kuwait may be cheaper and much convenient, given the lifestyles of the people. But when compared with the series of after effects it brings, starting from obesity, juvenile diabetes, cancer and a host of other auto-immune diseases that result in bringing down the average life expectancy of individuals, it is the responsibility of both the government and non-governmental organizations to evaluate the

disadvantages and take necessary actions on a time bound manner to save the future generations from the clutches of fast food and associated sedentary lifestyles. A massive movement and awareness campaign by utilizing the mass media is the need of the hour.

Solution to the Problems

The Kuwaiti Government has to devise appropriate strategies to fight obesity among children. The school curriculum needs to include appropriate programs to teach the importance of having healthy lifestyles by having balanced diet plans and exercising. It can also encourage community gyms and indoor air conditioned play grounds by providing subsidy, in addition to insisting the corporate social responsibility of companies to fight the obesity malady. Developing play areas, swimming pools, vehicle free zones and promoting cycling are some ways of increasing the physical activities of youngsters during early mornings and evenings when the weather is conducive. Promoting ethnic and traditional foods rich in antioxidants and other essential nutrients also prevent obesity and associated diseases. Restaurants and even fast food outlets can also be encouraged to sell vegetables and traditional foods with whole grains. In the agriculture front, the government can also promote organic farming and kitchen gardening. Vegetable gardening at schools, if made mandatory, would help the new generation understand the value of healthy eating habits. Besides, children also get opportunities to do physical activities by gardening.

Conclusion

Kuwait can build a healthy society by bringing about awareness among the masses, particularly the youth about establishing proper eating habits and life styles. Apart from conducting awareness programs at schools and colleges, the media, including the press and television, need to be properly utilized to take the message to the common public. The key to walk the talk here again is making accessible healthy vegetables and organic foods, and places of physical activity to everyone at affordable cost to the common people.

References

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