

unicef 

联合国儿童基金会

携手为儿童



© UNICEF/CHINA/2020/MA YUYUAN

A UNICEF  
PRIORITY FOR  
2021-2025

**HEALTHY WEIGHT  
AMONG CHILDREN**

# THE ISSUE

Child overweight and obesity rates have grown rapidly in urban and rural areas of China. The 2015 Global Burden of Disease report estimates that 15 million children aged 2-19 years old are obese in China. Based on a national report on nutrition and noncommunicable diseases in 2020, the prevalence of overweight (including obesity) is 10 per cent for children under 6, and 19 per cent for children aged 6-17. Without action, the threat of childhood obesity could have severe short-term and long-term consequences, leading to chronic illness, disability and mortality.

A major cause of this problem is an increase in the consumption of foods and beverages that far exceeds a child's daily requirements of sugar, fat and calories over a prolonged period. Diets have changed rapidly and there is a lack of commensurate regulation of the production, labeling and marketing of unhealthy and ultra-processed foods – especially to children.

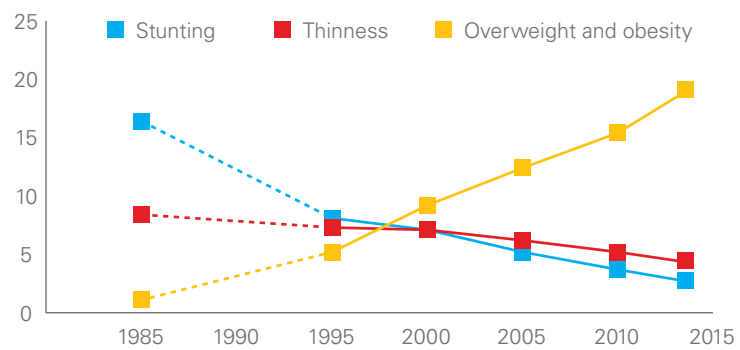
A more regulated food environment would make it easier for parents, caregivers and adolescents to make informed, healthy choices about their diet. If this could be combined with higher nutrition literacy, the risks of unhealthy food choices would decrease further. UNICEF is working with government partners to create an environment that promotes nutritious, affordable and sustainable diets as part of healthy lifestyles for children.

## LEARN MORE:

[www.unicef.cn](http://www.unicef.cn)



## Prevalence of stunting, thinness and overweight/obesity among children (7–18 years old) in China, 1985–2014<sup>1</sup>



## UNICEF'S KEY MESSAGES



Rates of overweight and obesity among children have been growing rapidly, and **the risk can arise in early childhood** when eating behaviours and patterns are set.



Overweight and obesity in children **link directly to long-term chronic health conditions** that have extensive healthcare costs, such as diabetes, hypertension and metabolic syndrome.



Beyond health impacts, overweight and obesity are detrimental to children's **long-term development, confidence and happiness**.



A healthy lifestyle is built on a healthy diet, exercise and sleep. Each is **essential**.



To alter trends in rising overweight and obesity among children, there is a need to **create healthy food environments** for children and their parents so that it is easier for them to make healthy choices.



Creating a healthy environment requires **wide-ranging regulatory and policy interventions**. Two priority areas are:

- Revising the Regulation on Supervision and Management of Food Labeling to improve the clarity of food labels
- Updating the Advertising Law to add articles on restricting the advertisement of unhealthy food and beverages to children.



UNICEF is working with adolescents to **empower** them to:

- Make healthy choices more appealing to their peers
- Increase awareness of advertising and marketing that may encourage adolescents and young people to consume unhealthy food and drinks.

<sup>1</sup> Song Y, Agardh A, Ma J, Li L, Lei Y, Stafford RS, Prochaska JJ. National trends in stunting, thinness and overweight among Chinese school-aged children, 1985–2014. *Int J Obes*. 2018 Jun; 18:1.