



## **ADDRESSING OBESITY TOGETHER: CHANGING SYSTEMS, HEALTHIER LIVES**

World Obesity Day and World Obesity Day Europe are held annually on March 4th. In 2025 we are calling for everyone everywhere to:

### **INCREASE AWARENESS AND IGNITE URGENT ACTION:**

Obesity is a chronic, relapsing disease. It is a gateway to other NCDs, including cardiovascular diseases, renal disease, liver diseases and at least 13 types of cancer.

The costs of failure to treat obesity can be translated in human and economic terms.

From policy through to medical management in primary care, improved understanding of the causes and consequences of obesity is essential and immediate action is needed to address them.

Health systems across Europe must recognise obesity as a chronic disease and one that is also a driver of other diseases. Immediate action on obesity is a critical step in reducing the EU burden of other chronic diseases, including diabetes, heart diseases, renal and liver diseases and cancer. The time to act is now.

### **MOBILISE ADVOCACY:**

Changing the way obesity is addressed across society, we're empowering everybody to become advocates, standing up and driving urgent change. Demand better.

### **DRIVE POLICY CHANGE:**

Creating a healthier environment that prioritises obesity as a health issue, our multidisciplinary group of stakeholders, including patient leaders and advocates across the community of European health professionals, are working to lead policy changes at regional, national and local levels, to build the robust support systems for the future. We want to ensure that people living with obesity across Europe receive the right treatment and management at the right time. Delayed treatment and management is costing lives and drastically increases the risk of developing other NCDs. We can't wait.

### **AMPLIFY VOICES:**

Together, we are creating collaborations to share experiences across disease areas, inspiring and uniting a Europe-wide community to work towards our common goals. Addressing Obesity Together, we are stronger.

## ERADICATE STIGMA:

It is essential that we work together to help eradicate stigma around obesity by promoting evidence-based understanding and aggressively advocate for systemic change.

#WODEurope provides an opportunity to educate across stakeholder groups to challenge the misconception that obesity is a result of personal choices. Our campaign supports the use of appropriate, non-stigmatising person-first language, provides opportunities for reaching out to primary care physicians and other healthcare professionals, helps us connect with policy communities and stands as a platform to push for responsible and accurate media representation of obesity as a chronic disease. Stigma has no place in healthcare systems, in media or in government systems.

Systems change is relevant for all stakeholder groups, from policy through to practice.

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## World Obesity Day in Numbers

*Reference: World Obesity Federation [Obesity Atlas 2024](#)*

There are an estimated **213 million adults** in the WHO European Region currently (2025) living with obesity, and a further **255 million** who are living with overweight. Together this amounts to more than **66%** of the adult population.

Assuming no significant interventions, it is estimated that **by 2035** more than **77%** of the adult population will be living with overweight or obesity (**263 million** living with obesity and **246 million** living with overweight).

The number of **children** (aged 5-19 years) in the WHO European Region living with obesity in 2025 is estimated to be nearly **95 million**. A further **104 million** are living with overweight.

Assuming no significant interventions, the number of children living with obesity is expected to have risen to **156 million** in 2035 and the number of children living with overweight to more than **125 million**. This means that around **40%** of children in Europe will be living with overweight or obesity.

Globally, it is estimated that more than **1.01 billion** adults are living with obesity and **1.52 billion** are living with overweight in 2025. Together this represents **46%** of the world's adult population.

The number of children currently living with obesity is estimated to be **240 million** and a further **310 million** are living with overweight.

Assuming no significant interventions, it is estimated that by **2035** more than **54%** of the global adult population will be living with overweight or obesity (**1.53 billion** living with obesity and **1.77 billion** living with overweight)

Assuming no significant interventions, the number of children living with obesity is expected to have risen to **380 million** in **2035** and the number of children living with overweight to more than **390 million**. This means that around **39%** of children in the world will be living with overweight or obesity.

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**Obesity is a chronic, complex disease that can cause or lead to an increased risk of many other non-communicable diseases (NCDs).**

**Among them are many cardiovascular-renal-metabolic diseases that are highly prevalent worldwide:**

**>2.5 billion people\*** live with **hyperlipidaemia**<sup>1</sup>. Hyperlipidaemia (high cholesterol) is an excess of lipids or fats in your blood. This can increase your risk of heart attack and stroke because blood can't flow through your arteries easily.

**~1.66 billion people** live with **Metabolic Dysfunction-Associated Steatotic Liver Disease (MASLD)**<sup>2†</sup>. Metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease is when fat builds up in your liver. It was once called non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD). MASLD may not cause symptoms. Having obesity or Type 2 diabetes increases the risk of developing it. Around 20-30% of those living with MASLD will progress to **Metabolic Dysfunction-Associated Steatohepatitis (MASH)**<sup>3</sup>. MASH is inflammation of your liver caused by excess fat cells (steatotic liver disease). Chronic inflammation causes progressive liver damage. MASH resembles hepatitis caused by alcohol use, but it stems from something else. It's most often associated with overweight, high blood lipids and high blood sugar.

**~1.28 billion people** aged 30-79 years live with **hypertension**<sup>4‡</sup>. Hypertension (high blood pressure) is when the pressure in your blood vessels is too high (140/90 mmHg or higher). It is common but can be serious if not treated. People with high blood pressure may not feel symptoms. The only way to know is to get your blood pressure checked.

**~843 million people** live with **chronic kidney disease (CKD)**<sup>5]</sup>. Chronic kidney disease means your kidneys are damaged and can't filter blood properly. The main risk factors for developing kidney disease are obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease.

**~523 million people** live with cardiovascular disease (**CVD**)<sup>6¶</sup>. Cardiovascular disease is a general term for conditions affecting the heart or blood vessels. It is usually associated with a build-up of fatty deposits inside the arteries (atherosclerosis) and an increased risk of blood clots. It can also damage arteries in organs such as the brain, heart, kidneys, and eyes.

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<sup>1</sup> Pirillo A, et al, Nat Rev Cardiol 2021; 18:689-700;

<sup>2</sup> Younossi ZN, et al. Hepatology 2023;77:1335-1347;

<sup>3</sup> Fernando DH, et al. Int J Mol Sci 2019;20:5037;

<sup>4</sup> NCD Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC) Lancet 2021;398:957980;

<sup>5</sup> Jager KJ, et al. Kidney Int 2019;96:1048-1050;

<sup>6</sup> GBD 2019 Diseases and Injuries Collaborators. Lancet 2020;396:1204-1222;

**~508 million people** live with **Type 2 Diabetes (T2D)**<sup>7</sup># Type 2 diabetes happens when your body can't use insulin properly. Without treatment, Type 2 diabetes can cause various health problems, like heart disease, kidney disease and stroke.

**~64 million people** live with **Heart Failure (HF)**<sup>8\*\*</sup>. Heart failure means the heart cannot properly pump blood around the body. It usually happens because the heart has become too weak or stiff. Obesity is often a major factor. Heart failure does not mean your heart has stopped working. This means that some support is needed to help it work better. It can occur at any age but is most common in older people. Heart failure is a long-term condition that tends to get gradually worse over time.

\*Based on the global prevalence (~39%) of raised plasma total cholesterol levels among adults aged ≥25 years in 2008 (global population was 6.7 billion in 2008)<sup>9</sup>

†Estimated prevalent cases of MASLD in 2019;

‡Number of people aged 30-79 years with hypertension in 2019;

|Number of people with CKD stages 1-5 in 2017;

¶Prevalence data for 2019; CV disease from 11 causes, including ischaemic heart disease, stroke, hypertensive heart disease and disability due to HF;

#Prevalence data for 2021;

\*\*Prevalence data for 2017.

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<sup>7</sup> GBD 2021 Diabetes Collaborators. Lancet 2023;402:203-234;

<sup>8</sup> GBD 2017 Disease and Injury Incidence and Prevalence Collaborators. Lancet 2018;392:1789-1858;

<sup>9</sup> 2008 World Population Data Sheet. 2008. Available at [https://www.prb.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/08/2008-WPDS\\_Eng.pdf](https://www.prb.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/08/2008-WPDS_Eng.pdf). Last accessed October 2024.