

Study suggests strong link between obesity and COVID death rate, world obesity federation

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The World Obesity Forum says people who are are obese or overweight should be prioritised for testing and vaccination. (Photo: Max Cavallari/EPA)

Geneva, March 4 (RHC)-- The death rate from COVID-19 is about 10 times higher in countries where half or more of the population is overweight, according to a report by the World Obesity Federation.

The report released on Wednesday titled COVID-19 and Obesity: The 2021 Atlas has shown that being overweight is a “highly significant predictor” of developing complications from contracting COVID-19 such

as hospitalisation, intensive care and mechanical ventilation, as well as being a “predictor of death” from the disease.

The researchers say that countries in which fewer than 40 percent of people are overweight had fewer coronavirus-linked deaths, whereas countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States and Italy, where more than 50 percent of the population is overweight, had a much higher death rate. “An overweight population is an unhealthy population, and a pandemic waiting to happen,” the report said.

The report flagged that in the UK, 73.7 percent of 10,465 patients who were critically ill with confirmed COVID-19 were overweight or obese. Meanwhile, Vietnam has the lowest level of overweight people in the population and the world’s second lowest COVID death rate.

It also highlighted that overweight and obesity could be risk factors for dangerous outcomes in people under 60 years old, with those who have a body mass index (BMI) between 30 and 34 twice as likely to be admitted to ICU compared with the ones with a BMI under 30.

“Reducing one major risk factor, overweight, would have resulted in far less stress on health services and reduced the need to protect those services from being overwhelmed,” the report found, suggesting that people who are obese or overweight should be prioritised for testing and vaccination.

A survey last month by The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that the obesity rate in the United States was 42 percent, higher than the 40 percent found in a 2015-16 study.

COVID-19 has killed more than 500,000 people in the US so far and 2.56 million across the world.

Information collected over the past two decades has also shown that excess bodyweight is linked to worse outcomes in MERS, H1N1 influenza and other influenza-related infections.

The London-based World Obesity Federation represents professional members of the scientific, medical and research communities from over 50 regional and national obesity associations. Members create a global community of organizations dedicated to solving the problems of obesity.

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