

Overweight and obesity among university students in Palestine

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This study aimed to assess the prevalence of overweight and obesity and their associations with dietary habits among students from An-Najah National University in Palestine. A cross-sectional study was conducted on 304 Students (50% males and 50% females). Students were asked to fill in a standard questionnaire. Weight, height, and waist circumference were measured and hemoglobin level was tested. Statistical analysis was conducted using the SPSS version 15.0. The prevalence rates of overweight and obesity among students were 20.1% and 4.6%, respectively. Overweight and obesity were more common among males compared to females (27.0% and 5.9% vs. 13.2% and 3.3%, respectively). The prevalence of abdominal obesity among students was 17.8% and was more common among females (23.0%) compared to males (12.5%). The prevalence of anaemia was 13.8%. Anaemia was more common among females (18.4%) than males (9.2%), ($P < 0.05$). 5.3% of males were underweight compared to 4.6% of females. 68.4% of students reported that they take meals irregularly and a significant difference was found between males and females in meal patterns ($P < 0.05$). Also there were significant differences between males and females in physical activity (69.1% of males and 55.9% of females practiced sports), and smoking (51.3% of males and 91.4% of females never smoked, while 48.7% of males and 8.6% of females were current smokers), ($P < 0.05$). University students would benefit from nutritional and health promotion programs to reduce the tendency of overweight and obesity. Educational programs are needed to encourage consumption of fruits and vegetables to improve students' eating habits.

Biography

Haleama Al Sabbah has completed her Ph.D in 2008 from Gent University-Belgium and currently she is a Fulbright Visiting Scholar doing Post-Doctoral studies in Nutrition at Tufts University, Jean Mayer Human Nutrition Center. She is the director of Public Health and Nutrition Departments at the Faculty of Medicine, An-Najah University, West Bank-Palestine. She has many published articles in scientific journals and serving as an editorial board member and reviewer for many scientific journals. She participated in many conferences, courses and research studies in all over the world including Europe, USA, Canada, West Africa and some Arab countries.

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