

[theday.co.uk/obesity-now-greater-global-risk-than-hunger-4](https://theday.co.uk/obesity-now-greater-global-risk-than-hunger-4)



**Heavy duty:** Roughly 159 million children and 879 million adults are now officially obese.

## Can we reverse the trend? A new report contains worrying news about the number of people who are obese or overweight.

### What's happening?

Sam looks at the supermarket shelves. He could have an apple. Or he could have a chocolate bar... or caramel crisps... or a cupcake...

Like many people around the world, Sam is dangerously overweight. According to a new survey,<sup>1</sup> one eighth of the world's population is **obese**. That is about one billion people. Obesity can be a risk factor in heart disease, cancer and a certain form of **diabetes**.

### Find out more

The survey found that between 1990 and 2022, obesity more than doubled in women. In men it almost tripled. In children and adolescents it **quadrupled**.

The proportion of underweight adults has fallen by 50% — although in some countries it is still worryingly high. But in some countries the figures are still alarming. In **Eritrea** 30% of people are underweight.

Many experts see ultra-processed foods such as crisps, pizzas and biscuits as a major factor in obesity. They contain more fats, sugar and salt than are good for us, and fewer **nutrients** and fibres than we need.

But there are possible ways of tackling the problem. Some have called for **governments** to put **taxes** on unhealthy foods and make healthy foods cheaper.

Others say we should ban adverts for unhealthy food and make sure that more children take part in sports at schools and that every adult can go to a gym.

Other countries have different plans. In Japan, people over 45 have to have their waists measured every year to check for signs of obesity.

**Can we reverse the trend?**

## Some say

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Yes! We should treat obesity like we treat smoking. We can make it easier for people to eat healthy foods, and harder for companies to sell unhealthy foods.

## Others think

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No! Food companies are very powerful. They will try to make sure that changes to laws do not make it harder to sell unhealthy foods. And nowadays, unhealthy eating has become normal in many places. This will be hard to change.

## Some people say

*"If we're not willing to settle for junk living, we certainly shouldn't settle for junk food."*

**Sally Edwards (1947 – ), American athlete**

*What do you think?*

## Six steps to discovery

### 1. Connect

**How do you feel about this story?** - Do you find junk food hard to resist?

### 2. Wonder

**What questions do you have?** - For example: Which countries have the healthiest diet? How many people in your country are obese?

### 3. Investigate

**What are the facts?** - Pick out one thing we know for certain and one thing we cannot say for sure from this story.

### 4. Construct

**What is your point of view?** - You meet someone who claims to have invented a cure for obesity. Think about what you would say.

### 5. Express

**What do others believe?** - What could your school do to encourage healthy eating? Discuss ideas as a class.

### 6. Reflect

**What might happen next?** - Imagine that you are asked to help with a campaign for healthy eating. Design a poster for it.

## Glossary

**Obese** - For adults, obesity is defined as a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 30 or more. A BMI of 25 or more is classed as overweight.

**Diabetes** - A medical condition causing there to be too much sugar in the blood.

**Quadrupled** - Became four times bigger or higher.

**Eritrea** - A country in the Horn of Africa that won its independence from Ethiopia in 1993. It has one of the worst human rights records in the world.

**Nutrients** - Substances that plants and animals need to live and grow. The six essential nutrients our bodies need are vitamins, minerals, protein, fats, water, and carbohydrates.

**Governments** - Groups of people who govern - or lead - countries.

**Taxes** - There are three main ways for governments to obtain money: print it, borrow it or collect taxes.