

Obesity and related lifestyle factors among young, middle-aged, and older Korean men and women

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Introduction

It is important to acknowledge lifestyle factors in order to provide tailored advice for obesity management. Difference of lifestyles between generations are prominent in Korea. We investigated the prevalence of obesity, severe obesity, and lifestyle factors among young, middle-aged, and older Korean men and women.

Materials and methods

We analyzed 11130 participants (5038 men and 6092 women) from the Korea National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey 2019 and 2020. We evaluated the prevalences of obesity (BMI ≥ 25 kg/m²), severe obesity (BMI ≥ 30 kg/m²), heavy drinking, current smoking, low physical activity, high fat intake, and frequent eating out among men and women with age of 20 – 39, 40 – 59, and ≥ 60 years, respectively. We calculated the odds ratios (ORs) and 95% confidence intervals (CIs) for obesity, severe obesity, and poor lifestyle factors according to age groups using multivariate logistic regression analysis.

Results

Prevalence of obesity was 46.3%, 46.6%, and 38.6% and severe obesity was 11.3%, 6.9%, and 2.8% among men with age of 20 – 39, 40 – 59, and ≥ 60 years, respectively. In men, the odds for heavy drinking (1.06, 0.89 – 1.28), current smoking (2.35, 1.93 – 2.86), and frequent eating out (3.89, 3.01 – 5.03) was highest among those with age of 40 – 59 years compared with those with age of ≥ 60 years. The odds for low physical activity increased as age increased, and the odds for high fat intake increased as age decreased (p for trend < 0.05). Prevalence of obesity was 20.7%, 28.4%, and 37.5% and severe obesity was 6.2%, 5.6%, and 5.0% among women with age of 20 – 39, 40 – 59, and ≥ 60 years, respectively. The odds for low physical activity increased as age increased; whereas, the odds for heavy drinking, current smoking, high fat intake, and frequent eating out increased as age decreased (p for trend < 0.05).

Conclusions

Poor lifestyle factors were more prevalent among young and middle-aged groups compared with older group in both men and women. In Korean men, prevalence of obesity was high among young and middle-aged groups, and prevalence of severe obesity increased as age decreased. In Korean women, prevalence of obesity increased as age increased; however, prevalence of severe obesity increased as age decreased. Lifestyle modification should be more emphasized in young adults for the prevention and management of obesity and severe obesity in Korea.