

Two out of three women over 35 in Indian cities obese: Study

Kounteya Sinha / TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Two out of three women in urban India, and one in three in rural India above the age of 35 are overweight. Nearly half of all urban women and a third of rural women have high blood pressure. One in four urban women and one in eight rural women suffer from high cholesterol. Yet, 48% of urban women and 44% of rural women lead a sedentary lifestyle. Only 4% of urban women and 25% of their rural counterparts had no risk of noncommunicable diseases like hypertension, cholesterol and diabetes.

These are the shocking findings of a three-year multi-site countrywide study on nutrition-related non-communicable diseases in women over 35. Funded by the department of science and technology (DST) and coordinated by Dr Anoop Misra and Dr R M Pandey of AIIMS, the study surveyed 4,621 women in four regions of India. The study surveyed 2,008 women in selected urban sites, and 2,613 in rural sites.

The findings are alarming. Almost 81% of women in urban Kolkata suffer from abdominal obesity. Among rural women studied, those in Gandhigram (40%) were the worst off in this regard.

Women in Jaipur (47%) were most hypertensive in urban India. The corresponding rural figure, at almost 55%, was highest for rural Puducherry.

Jaipur also topped the chart (68%) for overweight urban women, while Puducherry (51%) topped the rural one.

Women's nutrition needs attention: Expert

New Delhi: A three-year research project on nutrition and nutrition-related non-communicable diseases in Indian women over 35 has found that in urban areas, diabetes was the highest among women in Kochi (26%), followed by Kolkata (13%). Rural women fared better, with Puducherry topping the prevalence rate with 7%, followed by 6% in Gandhigram. The prevalence of cholesterol was found to be extremely high in urban Jaipur, affecting one in four women. Rural women did not fare better, however—29% of women in Ballabgarh, another research site, were found to have high cholesterol.

Ironically, even though the study indicated high levels of over-nutrition in the women studied, the prevalence of anemia was seen among rural women. More than 80% women were anaemic in Gandhigram (88%), Pune-rural (86%) and Puducherry rural (84%) followed by Ballabgarh (74%). Even in urban areas, with the exception of Puducherry urban (15%), anaemia was found in more than 25% of women.

Researcher Anoop Misra of Fortis Hospital said, "This survey shows the high prevalence of obesity, high BP, diabetes and cholesterol levels in women above 35 years of age. Most shocking is that 96% urban women and 75% rural women were found to have at least one such risk factor. We have found that there's substantial burden of multiple non-communicable diseases in middle-aged and elderly women, resulting in significant load of heart disease and stroke in India. Health agencies have paid little attention to the

prevention and management of these diseases in this segment.”

Dr Misra’s collaborator, Dr R M Pandey of AIIMS said, “According to National Institute of Nutrition norms, less than 10% of our daily diet should consist of fatty acids, while the level of fat intake should not exceed 30% of daily calories consumed. The study has shown how a bad diet and sedentary lifestyle is predisposing women above the age of 35 to risks of non-communicable diseases.” TNN

