



Paris, May 16, 2017

Tuesday May 23: European Obesity Day

Obesity is an excess of body fat that leads to health problems - principally type 2 diabetes and hypertension, and reduces life expectancy.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines obesity as "abnormal or excessive fat accumulation that presents a risk to health".

According to WHO, 13% of adults worldwide were obese in 2014, a figure that had doubled since 1980.

Obesity is often diagnosed using the body mass index (BMI), a calculation that estimates a person's body fat. BMI is a person's weight (in kg) divided by the square of his or her height (in meters).

Supported by Inserm and the French national health insurance fund for salaried workers (Cnamts), the Constances cohort collates health data on more than 110,000 French people. According to initial estimates published in the French National Public Health Agency's weekly epidemiological bulletin, nearly one in two French people are thought to be overweight and overall obesity (defined as a BMI greater than or equal to 30 kg/m²) is thought to be close to 16%.

["L'excès de poids des Français confirmé par la cohorte Constance"](#), published October 25, 2016.

This chronic condition not just leads to psychological and social discomfort but also health problems, principally type 2 diabetes, hypertension, osteoarthritis, sleep apnea syndrome, and cardiovascular disease.

To address this rising obesity in France, the country's Public Health Agency requested that Inserm carry out a collective expert appraisal in order to take stock of the scientific knowledge and to analyze the impact of health messages disseminated by the mass media on cognition, attitudes, intentions and behaviors in relation to nutrition.

["Action on dietary behaviours, a collective expert review by Inserm"](#), published April 4, 2017.

It is not just the changes in our dietary habits but also our sedentary lifestyles and decreased physical activity that play an indisputable role in the development of obesity. The team of researchers from Inserm Unit 1153 (Université Denis Diderot/Université Paris

Nord/French national institute for agricultural research (Inra)), in charge of following up more than 800 children (EDEN cohort), has demonstrated that the amount of time spent playing outdoors or watching TV during early childhood is already a predictor of obesity risk later in life.

[“Obésité : dès 2 ans, l’activité physique et la sédentarité sont déterminantes”](#), published January 24, 2017.

Researchers at Inserm have also revealed the role played by the environment in the development of this pathology, with notably the exposure to pollutants that is thought to promote the development of additional diseases in people who are obese.

[“Organic pollutants and obesity are not a good combination”](#), published May 9, 2017.

Read the latest Inserm news in this category:

[“L’environnement social associé à la masse corporelle des enfants”](#), published June 21, 2016.

[“Ecouter sa faim peut aider à être mince”](#), published April 7, 2016.

[Watch POM Bio à croquer “Obésité et complications”](#).

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Constances cohort

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Childhood obesity and inactivity

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Organic pollutants and obesity

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