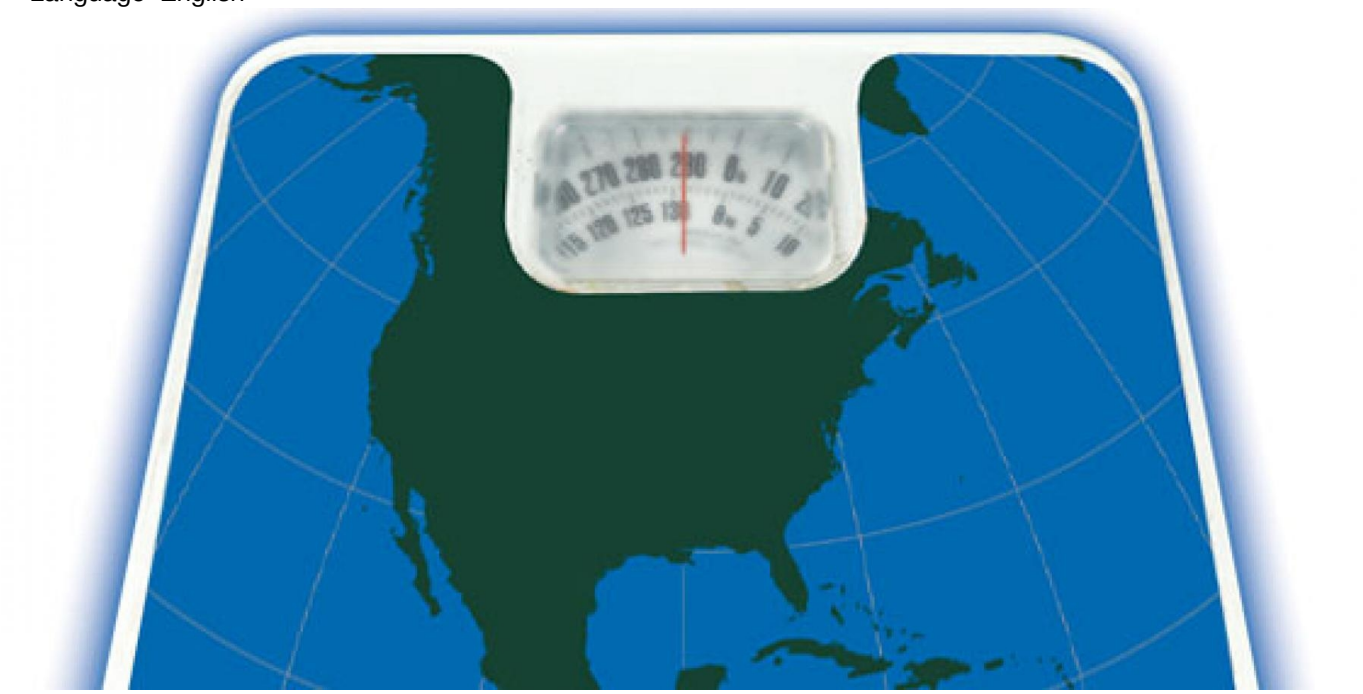
Experts Gather To Discuss the 'Super-Sized World' and the Global Obesity Epidemic

Language English



Overweight and obesity, risk factors for type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, stroke, and certain forms of cancer, are responsible for a significant portion of the global burden of chronic disease.

They are also implicated in the chronic disability that affects many people's lives. These problems represent a significant challenge to public health experts and policymakers not just in the U.S. and other comparatively wealthy countries, but also in developing nations where their impact is compounded by the effects of poor infrastructure, persistent nutrient and even calorie deficits, and rapidly changing economic and demographic features accompanied by dramatic dietary adjustments.

At Super-Sized World: The Global Obesity Epidemic on December 9, 2010, the New York Academy of Sciences, the Sackler Institute for Nutrition Science, and the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health convened a panel of experts in public health to discuss everything from current scientific understandings of overweight and obesity to the clinical, economic, and health policy initiatives that might help to stem the tide of this dangerous epidemic.

In their conversation, the speakers assessed body mass index (BMI) versus alternative measures of body fat, presented the latest research into the importance of fetal nutrition for adult health, evaluated the influence of environmental and genetic causes of overweight, and explained the differential burden of disease for ethnic, gender, and socioeconomic groups.

Driving at the heart of these and many other issues, speakers also emphasized the need for a re-conceptualization both of the categories of overweight and obesity and of the way public health policy efforts are marshaled combat the epidemic.

Speakers proposed, among other options, multi-faceted interventions that recognize the intersections of various causes of disease, a new policy-oriented framework for scientific research, and policy measures to change the kinds of food and physical activity choices that are seen as the norm. At this event presenters clarified the nature of the obesity problem and the global reach of its implications, and, more hearteningly, explored promising alternatives for stopping the epidemic's spread.

To successfully limit the detrimental effects of obesity worldwide, all of these efforts will require a great deal collaboration between public health experts, government officials, national governments, basic science researchers, and community representatives. The full meeting report is available here. [1]

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