

Policy Extract

[Plan of Action for the Prevention of Obesity in Children and Adolescents](#)

This document provides Member States with the rationale and key strategic lines of action for comprehensive public health interventions to halt the progression of the obesity epidemic in children and adolescents. To that end, this five-year plan sets a goal and proposes five areas of action, including objectives and indicators. Each Member State, as a sovereign entity, may implement policies and regulations proposed in this Plan of Action according to its national needs and objectives.

This Plan of Action focuses on children and adolescents for a number of reasons. Firstly, breastfeeding may reduce the prevalence of overweight and obesity by about 10%. Secondly, the earlier a person becomes overweight or obese, the greater is his or her risk of remaining overweight or obese at older ages. Thirdly, obesity has adverse health consequences at early stages of life, as it increases the risk of asthma, type-2 diabetes, sleep apnea, and cardiovascular diseases. Fourthly, since dietary habits are formed early in life, the promotion and consumption of energy-dense nutrient-poor products, sugar sweetened beverages, and fast foods in childhood interfere with the formation of healthy dietary habits (28, 29). Finally, children are unable to discern the persuasive intent of marketing, and advertising of foods and beverages of minimal nutritional value.

Goal

The overall goal of this Plan of Action is to halt the rise of the rapidly growing obesity epidemic in children and adolescents, so that there is no increase in current country prevalence rates. This goal requires a multisectoral life-course approach that is based on the social-ecological model and focuses on transforming the current obesogenic environment into opportunities for increased intake of nutritious foods and improved physical activity. This will be accomplished by implementing a set of effective policies, laws, regulations, and interventions, which will take into account the priorities and context of Member States, in the following strategic lines of action:

- a) Primary health care and promotion of breastfeeding and healthy eating;
- b) Improvement of school food and physical activity environments;
- c) Fiscal policies and regulation of food marketing and labelling;
- d) Other multisectoral actions;
- e) Surveillance, research and evaluation.