



Statement to the 74<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly  
Agenda item 17.1

## COVID-19

World Obesity welcomes the report A74/15. 90% of deaths from COVID-19 have occurred in countries with high obesity rates. Obesity increases the risks of hospitalization, intensive care unit admission and death from COVID-19<sup>1</sup>, yet until the arrival of COVID-19, the health consequences of obesity were underplayed and often conflated with other issues such as diabetes.

[The evidence that obesity is an independent and leading risk for complications and mortality](#) from COVID-19 clearly demonstrates that it is a global health security issue, and a disease requiring urgent action now and in preparation for future pandemics. Because COVID-19 disproportionately impacts people living with NCDs, including people living with obesity, there is an urgent need to step up policy action and investment in NCD and obesity prevention, treatment and management, both in recovery and future preparedness plans. Governments around the world need to take action on obesity as part of global health security efforts.

We urge Member States to:

- Recognise that **obesity is a disease** in its own right, as well as a risk factor for other conditions and severity of COVID-19 outcomes
- Support a WHA **Resolution on obesity** to mandate equitable global action on obesity, covering prevention, treatment and management of the disease
- **Ensure that people living with obesity are consulted** throughout the development of guidance and policies affecting their care, during COVID-19 and in advancing UHC

With global obesity targets catastrophically off-track, other health targets remain in jeopardy. The WHO's target for 1 billion people to live healthier lives by 2023 will not be met without action on obesity. The recovery from COVID-19 presents an opportunity to improve health outcomes across all systems, and address the root causes of obesity by adopting an integrated, equitable, comprehensive, person-centred approach to obesity.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/obesity-and-covid-19.html>