

How to Get Rid of Obesogens (Environmental Factors)

For years, doctors have told their obese patients in good faith that all it takes to solve the problem is the will to diet. Recent research shows that it is not that simple. Beware, warns Sylvie Benkemoun, clinical psychologist and vice-president of the Allegro Fortissimo association, “some practitioners still believe that losing weight is possible for everyone. And many patients, at each meeting with a new “specialist” still hope to have found the miracle solution”.

Do we become obese because of our individual behavior or is obesity a disease of society? This question is being debated and is at the heart of preventive strategies. Research shows that obesity is multifactorial. Innate (genetic) or acquired (e.g. during intrauterine life) predispositions explain why everyone’s vulnerability to an “obesogenic” environment or obesogens is different.

Our lifestyle is conducive to weight gain. The omnipresence of food and the pressure of advertising, encourage us to eat beyond our needs and hunger. Moreover, the industrialization of food has led to an increase in portions (large squares of chocolate, XXL hamburgers, “magnum” size ice cream) and the caloric density of food (concentrated in fat and/or sugar). The more sedentary we are, the more unbalanced our energy balance becomes. Urbanization, the evolution of jobs and leisure activities, and even the possibility of heating the house well, all go in the direction of reducing expenses.

The solution lies in prevention

Although researchers are well aware of the abnormalities of adipose tissue caused by obesity, their work has not yet led to the development of drugs. Hence the importance of

prevention, to be implemented as early as possible, before obesity is established, and even more so if there is a predisposition in the family.

Two axes are essential and complementary: diet (eat a balanced diet, eat 3 to 4 meals a day at more or less regular times, focus on foods rich in fiber...) and physical activity (at least 30 minutes a day on average, whether it is walking or sports).

If you feel that you gain weight easily, or if you have a few pounds to lose, it is in your best interest to ask a health professional, doctor or dietician for advice. But above all, don't start the latest diet in vogue: according to a recent report by the Anses, not only are restrictive diets deficient, but they also cause weight gain in 85% of cases*. For children, diets should be banned. But it is important to follow the evolution of their body mass index curve and to consult a doctor if necessary to restore balance in their meals. Finally, if you are not a sportsman, before starting a discipline, it is preferable to see your doctor, or even to do an effort test.

Since the environment in which we live is "obesogenic", the public authorities are investing in prevention. "The incentive to physical activity will be a strong axis of the PNNS 3 which will be unveiled this spring", warns Pr Serge Hercberg, who coordinates the National Nutrition Health Program since the beginning. "This means facilitating exercise in daily life: by increasing the number of walking and cycling routes, with the help of local authorities, and by making bicycles available, such as the Velib' in Paris... Also to identify and make more accessible to the public existing sports activities. Another aspect of the PNNS is to continue the work already undertaken with the food industry, so that more of them commit, through charters, to improve the nutritional balance of their products (less fat/sugar/salt). Finally, among the many measures proposed to fight against social inequality in the field of nutrition, the experts recommend regulating advertising aimed

at young people (studies have shown that it influences their dietary behavior), and distributing coupons to the most disadvantaged people to buy fruit and vegetables.