

Amman, Jordan, 13 September 2015 – The World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean organized in Jordan a forum on unopposed marketing of unhealthy food and beverages targeting children on 13–14 September 2015. This event is part of WHO's initiative to fight overweight and obesity, a condition that affects more than 42 million children under the age of five worldwide. Obese infants and children are likely to continue being obese during adulthood and are more likely to develop a variety of health problems, including cardiovascular disease, insulin resistance, musculoskeletal disorders and some cancers, including endometrial, breast and colon as well as disability.

Unopposed marketing refers to the lack of legal and social control required for the community to be protected from the commercially driven industrial epidemics. Scientific research shows that marketing that encourages the consumption of fast foods and sodas is causing an unprecedented upsurge in childhood obesity. A key contributor to chronic diseases is unhealthy weight. The prevalence of overweight and obesity in the Eastern Mediterranean Region is alarming, among both adults and children. The prevalence of overweight is 46.8%, higher than the global average of 39% and obesity is 19%, higher than the global average of 12.9%.

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