Almost every country in the world, low-, middle- or high-income, faces some form of malnutrition including undernutrition, overweight/obesity, or a combination of these conditions.

This overlap of different types of malnutrition — undernutrition (e.g., stunting, vitamin and mineral deficiencies) co-existing with increasing rates of overweight and obesity — is known as the double burden of malnutrition.

Stunting (being too short for age) in young children is the result of undernutrition in the womb and early in life. In young children, stunting also is associated with poor brain development and educational performance, which leads to lower adult wages and lost productivity. When accompanied by excessive weight gain later in childhood, stunting is associated with increased risk of nutrition-related chronic diseases, such as diabetes.

While stunting and vitamin and mineral deficiencies remain high in many low- and middle-income countries, rising income, urbanization, changes in diet and reductions in physical activity also are driving a transition to the co-existence of undernutrition and overweight/obesity. The double burden presents enormous health, social and economic challenges to countries and action is needed now to address this changing face of malnutrition.
CHILDHOOD MALNUTRITION IN COLOMBIA

CAUSES

Vitamin and mineral deficiencies
A lack of essential vitamins and minerals increases the risk of infectious illnesses and can lead to anemia, poor growth and nutrition-related diseases such as blindness, rickets, goiter and neural tube defects. Iron deficiency can lead to anemia, impaired physical and cognitive development and increased risk of morbidity in children. Maternal iron deficiency can cause anemia and is associated with increased risk of maternal mortality and delivering a low birth weight baby, which can cause further childhood growth restrictions. Vitamin A deficiency can lead to decreased immune function, increased morbidity and mortality, and blindness.

Breastfeeding practices
Optimal breastfeeding can prevent undernutrition and can potentially prevent obesity and non-communicable diseases later in life. Exclusive breastfeeding (breast milk only) for the first six months of life followed by continued breastfeeding until two years of age and beyond gives babies the foundation for optimal health and development.

EFFECTS

Non-communicable diseases
Non-communicable diseases are associated with unhealthy diet, sedentary lifestyles and overweight/obesity. Undernutrition in the form of stunting is associated with increased risk of nutrition-related non-communicable diseases when accompanied by excessive weight gain later in childhood.

High blood pressure
High blood pressure is a leading cause of death and a major risk factor for heart disease.

Sources:

Nutrilite™ is the world’s number one selling vitamins and dietary supplements brand*. For more information, please visit globalnews.amway.com.


Thanks to The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) for providing technical assistance.