

# **NUTRITIONAL STATUS IN A REPRESENTATIVE GROUP POPULATION OF SCHOOL CHILDREN LIVING IN RURAL AND URBAN AREAS IN ALBANIA**

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## **Abstract**

**Objective:** Evaluation of the prevalence of overweight and obesity in Albanian children living in rural and urban areas, analysis of determinants and indicators of risk of overweight with the specific scope modification of the wrong eating habits and behaviors. **Materials and methods:** A transversal study on a representative sample group of children that frequent the fourth classes of elementary school were the target group. (1000 children 9-10 years old were enrolled in this study, from 3 districts Tirana, Shkodra and Vlora). This study was designed for evaluation of the anthropometric parameters, based in the body mass index (BMI) and assessment of their dietary preferences and habits. **Results:** The prevalence of overweight among the children in rural areas results 9.7%, where 0.3 % of them were obese. The number of the overweight children in rural areas results to be twice lower than in urban areas (19%). For each obese child in village there are more than 10 obese children in the city (4.2%). The children overweight engaged in an average of 2-h of active motor exercise and as much as 4-h of sedentary activity (watching television, playing video games, reading) with similar data for the zones. The most of over-weight children came from parents, who had highly qualified education. (63% of them in rural and 88% in urban areas). **Conclusions:** The childhood overweight and obesity is a big problem for public health in Albania especially in urban area. Observed behaviors are a major risk factor for childhood overweight These data, together with the analysis of the dietary preferences and food, will allow the introduction of specific measures aimed at preventing childhood obesity.

**Keywords:** *Overweight, obesity, school children.*