

Urban Planning and Health - Obesogenic environments

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1 ABSTRACT

Literature has shown that characteristics of neighbourhoods play a significant role in mediating the social and demographic relationships that affect people's lives, with an impact upon individual and community health. Obesogenic environments are those which are conducive to weight gain by encouraging the intake of excess calories and/or discouraging energy expenditure in daily routines. Using multilevel statistics, this paper assesses the effect of environmental factors upon Body Mass Index (BMI) in the residents of the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (LMA), concentrating upon the factors closely related to urban design, and which therefore offer some potential for change. In LMA, the risk of being overweight or obese depends not only upon individual factors (sex, age, physical exercise, e.g.), but also upon contextual factors (mobility, public transport accessibility, safety, social cohesion, availability of various infrastructures and resources: sports facilities, fresh food retail outlets, e.g.). The results highlight the need to reassess specific elements of urban design, and their relationship with BMI levels.