Current Opinion Nursing & Research
Official Journal of Nursing Pucarani

Editorial

ISSN 2707-4676 (print edition)
CONR
ISSN 2707-4684 (online edition)

The double burden of malnutrition in Bolivian adolescents: an emerging public health priority

La doble carga de malnutrición en adolescentes bolivianos: una prioridad emergente para la salud publica

Curr. Opin. Nurs. Res. 2026;8(1):1-3.

Malnutrition continues to be one of the main challenges of global public health. In low- and middle-income countries, this problem took on a new dimension due to the coexistence of different forms of malnutrition; malnutrition, micronutrient deficiency, overweight and obesity, reflecting the demographic, social and dietary changes associated with the nutritional transition[1,2].

Adolescence is a critical stage for growth and development, characterized by high nutritional demands and the consolidation of eating habits that have an impact on adult health. However, this population group continues to be underprioritized in nutrition policies, especially in contexts of socioeconomic inequality and structural food security problems[3].

In Bolivia, 20.9% of adolescents are overweight, 4.9% obese and 8% short stature[4], evidencing the coexistence of malnutrition due to deficiency and excess, making up the double burden of malnutrition. This phenomenon is favoured by accelerated changes in eating patterns, such as the increase in the consumption of ultra-processed products, which are rich in energy but poor in nutrients, together with a decrease in physical activity and increased screen time[5,6]. At the same time, social and economic inequalities limit access to healthy food, perpetuating malnutrition and other forms of nutritional vulnerability[7].

The consequences transcend the nutritional field; early malnutrition affects physical growth, cognitive development and academic performance, while excess weight increases the risk of chronic non-communicable diseases such as type 2 diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular diseases[1,8].

The double burden of malnutrition in Bolivian adolescents is an epidemiological reality that requires immediate action. Recognizing its magnitude and strengthening nutritional surveillance will make it possible to design comprehensive public policies aimed at reducing health inequities. Strategies such as complementary school feeding, the promotion of

healthy food environments, the regulation of advertising aimed at young people and the promotion of physical activity[2,6] are essential to prevent a growing burden of chronic diseases and ensure sustainable human development in future generations.

The double burden of malnutrition in Bolivian adolescents is not only a health challenge, but also an obstacle to the country's human and social development. Confronting it requires political will, intersectoral commitment and sustained actions that guarantee equal opportunities for new generations. Only in this way will it be possible to move towards a healthier, more equitable and sustainable future.

Conflict of interest

The author states that there is no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgements

To the Unidad Académica Campesina de Pucarani for its collaboration in the literature review.

Ethical considerations

The respective ethical considerations were made.

Literature Cited

1. Popkin BM, Corvalan C, Grummer-Strawn LM. Dynamics of the double burden of malnutrition and the changing nutrition reality. Lancet 2020;395(10217):65-74. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(19)32497-3
2. Menon S, Peñalvo JL. Actions targeting the double burden of malnutrition: a scoping review. Nutrients 2019; 12(1):81. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3390/nu12010081
3. Adolescent Health [Internet]. World Health Organization. 2026 [cited May 5, 2026]. Retrieved from: https://www.who.int/health-topics/adolescent-health#tab=tab_1
4. Ruegenberg Jerez A, Olmos Aliaga CY, Jimenez Soria RE. Estudio: "Prevalencia de sobrepeso y obesidad de los escolares y adolescentes en Bolivia [Internet]. La Paz: Ministerio de Salud; 2020 [citado 2 de mayo de 2026]. 204 p. Recuperado a partir de: https://www.unicef.org/bolivia/media/3201/file/prevalenciadesobrepesoyobesidaddelos escolaresyadolescentesenbolivia.pdf
5. Monteiro CA, Cannon G, Lawrence M, Costa Louzada MD, Pereira Machado P. Ultra-processed foods, diet quality, and health using the NOVA classification system [Internet]. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; 2019 [cited May 8, 2026]. 49 p. Retrieved from: https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/5277b379-0acb-4d97-a6a3-602774104629/content

6. Ministério da Saúde. Guia alimentar para a população brasileira [Internet]. Brasília: Ministério da Saúde; 2014 [citado 2 de mayo de 2026]. 158 p. Recuperado a partir de: http://189.28.128.100/dab/docs/portaldab/publicacoes/guia_alimentar_populacao_brasileira.pdf
7. FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. Food security and nutrition around the world. In: FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, editors. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World. Rome: FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO; 2023. p. 5-41. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4060/cc3017en
8. Miranda M, Bento A, Aguilar AM. Malnutrition in all its forms and socioeconomic status in Bolivia. Public Health Nutr 2020;23(S1):s21-s28. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/S1368980019003896

Condori Huanca Gloria Libertad
Universidad Católica Boliviana San Pablo
Dirección General de Unidades Académicas Campesinas
Unidad Académica Campesina de Pucarani
Physiotherapy-kinesiology
El Alto, San Felipe de Sekeke Urbanization
Sector 8, Av. Holanda 1041
La Paz - Plurinational State of Bolivia
Tel: +591-73253389
E-mail: gloriach_345@hotmail.com

2026. Current Opinion Nursing & Research. Bolivia. All rights reserved.