

BODY COMPOSITION OF NIGERIAN PRE-ADOLESCENTS, ADOLESCENTS AND ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

Modern Technological developments significantly contributed to a lifestyle that is characterized by physical inactivity. This is contrary to how the human body was prepared through evolution, which was characterized by vigorous physical activity. Available research evidence indicates that these significant changes in lifestyle, especially of women, has contributed to the increased incidence of degenerative disorders, like hypertension, obesity and over-weight, breast cancer and colon cancer. Any intervention to arrest this situation requires information on how and when changes in body composition take place. This study was therefore conducted to find out and compare body composition of Nigerian male and female pre-adolescents, adolescents and adults. For the purpose of this study, body composition included body mass index, conicity index, percent body fat and waist-hip-ratio. To achieve this purpose a total of 540 volunteer students consisting of 90 females and 90 males from each of pre-adolescent, adolescent and adult groups were selected at random from primary and secondary schools located in the city of Maiduguri. For body fat percent, triceps subscapular, suprailiac, abdominal and thigh skinfolds were recorded according to standard measurements. The results of this study indicated significant differences in all body composition measurements mainly because these measurements were higher in female adolescent and adult groups compared with pre-adolescent counterparts. However, the difference between female adolescents and adults was insignificant. On the basis of the results, it was suggested that the intervention programmes involving active lifestyles, including exercise programmes, should be implemented in the early part of adolescent period.