INTRODUCTION: The prevalence of obesity has increased worldwide in the past decade. Obesity is a risk factor for many chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes, and musculoskeletal disorders. Adolescent obesity is a major public health problem that impacts one out of every three children, resulting in 4-5 million overweight youth in the United States. The strongest predictors of adult obesity is adolescent obesity, with 70% of obese adolescents becoming obese adults. Identifying effective weight control strategies for adolescents is important and could help influence interventions for obesity in youth. The purpose of this study was to assess the adolescents' beliefs about obesity and overweight based on the health belief model, in Isfahan, 2010.

METHODS: This descriptive study was performed on 228 adolescent between 14-19 years old. The method of sampling was clustering. The participants were selected from 3 region of Isfahan. A self-administered questionnaire based on the Health Belief Model (HBM) was used for data collection that the Validity and reliability of the questionnaire was measured by content validity and test re-test, respectively. Statistical analyses consisted of Student’s t-tests, chi-square tests, ANOVA.

RESULTS: The mean age of adolescents was 17.85±1.3 years (112 girls and 116 boys). Perceived threat of obesity and benefits of preventive behaviors were (84%) and (92%) respectively among participants. Perceived barriers and self-efficacy were 60% and 77%, respectively. A significant relationship was found between age and Perceived threat, benefits and barriers ( p<0.01). Significant difference was found between Perceived barriers and behaviors related to weight reduction ( p<0.05). The results demonstrated that the fitness were important for 87.5% girls and 74.1% boys.

CONCLUSIONS: The recent increase in the proportion of the younger population needing help with activities of daily living is concerning, as is the doubling of obesity in the last few decades. These findings suggest important elements that should consider in developing effective intervention and prevention approaches for curbing the obesity epidemic among adolescents.

Keywords: beliefs, adolescent, obesity, health belief model.