



Parents Promoting the Prevention of Obesity

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The rise of childhood obesity & its potential consequences

It has been estimated that 11% of children in the United States between the ages of 6 and 17 are considered obese, with a Body Mass Index (BMI) greater than 95 percent of the child population. Another 14% of children are considered overweight, with a BMI between the 85th and 95th percentiles. The growth of childhood obesity is disturbing because 60% of overweight children have developed at least one cardiovascular risk factor and 20% have developed two or three. There are numerous health risks associated with childhood obesity, as well as social, emotional, psychological and academic problems.

Health risks

- * Type 2 diabetes
- * Hypertension
- * Cardiovascular disease
- * High Blood Pressure
- * Gallbladder disease
- * Osteoarthritis
- * Sleep Apnea
- * Hypoventilation Syndrome
- * Blount's disease (bowed bones, altered gait, hip & knee pain)
- * Ovary Diseases
- * Menstrual difficulties & Infertility (in adolescents)

Social, Emotional, & Psychological Risks

- * Higher risk of Depression in males
- * Higher risk of Oppositional Defiant Disorder in females
- * Eating Disorders
- * Distorted Body Image
- * Binge Eating
- * Anxiety
- * Low Self -Esteem



How do children become overweight?

Genetics may play a role in childhood obesity since overweight children are more likely to have overweight parents than average or underweight parents. However, this may be due more to similar eating habits than genetics. Research has

found that a child's innate taste preferences are for sweet and salty flavors. Research has also shown that when one food (ice cream) is used as a reward for eating another food (broccoli), children will start to prefer the foods that are used as re-

wards. Lastly, remember that children look up to and model parents behavior. If a child observes their parents eating healthy and being physically active, they are more likely to do the same.



What is BMI?
Body Mass Index is the most commonly used measure of obesity. It calculates the amount of body fat according to height and weight. To calculate the BMI, simply multiply the weight (in lbs) by 703 and divide that by the height (in squared inches).

What to do if your child is overweight

- ◆ Start exposing children to healthier foods! Children fear new and unfamiliar foods. They generally need about 10 exposures to a new food to accept it.
- ◆ Be a good role model! Children are more likely to eat food that their parents, teachers, siblings and peers are eating.
- ◆ Try to keep only healthy items in the kitchen! Children have an easier time eating healthy if they don't have to see the sweet snacks in front of them.
- ◆ Try signing your child up for a sport at school or an outside class such as dance or karate.



Get the whole family involved!

- ◆ Limit television watching and encourage children to go outside and play.
- ◆ Don't single the child out by setting restrictions only on what he/she can't eat! Have the entire family start eating healthier and exercising.
- ◆ Don't reward children for eating! Children tend to overeat when they are rewarded for eating.
- ◆ Don't use food as a reward! Instead, reward them by giving them more of your attention by playing a game with them or doing another fun activity.

Want to Learn More? Go to...

★ www.cdc.gov/obesity/childhood

This website provides information about the causes of obesity, and the many healthy risks associated with childhood obesity. At the bottom of the webpage, the "Tips for Parents" link transports you to the Healthy Eating page, which provides tips for parents to help their children maintain a healthy weight.

★ www.obesity.org/information/childhood_overweight.asp

The Obesity Society gives instructions for parents to determine if their child is overweight by calculating the child's BMI (Body Mass Index). The site lists potential negative psychological and health consequences of childhood obesity. Factors that contribute to childhood obesity, including parental eating and physical activity habits are also listed. Parents can also receive information about establishing healthy eating habits with their children.

Sources used in this newsletter

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