

Childhood Obesity

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The fresh meaty scent is inhaled through their premature noses. The aroma of the overly salted French fries and the irresistible color schemes of the PlayPlace calls their little minds into the front doors of the local McDonalds. The overrated memories of sitting at the breakfast table with the children and parents while eating cereal and grapefruit no longer exist. The simplicity of taking our little ones to the nearest fast food chain or popping a frozen burrito in the microwave has replaced this at home family breakfast experience. No time, too hard, or whatever the reason may be to not taking effort into preparing their meals, is affecting them. Children are addicted to the eating out experience and the microwave dinner. A child's diet contributes to their overall health, academic performance, appearance, energy, and personality. Without the right diet, children can be forced to face what over nine million other children are facing, childhood obesity.

Obesity does not happen overnight, it is a gradual process that has many factors. The best way to significantly affect the prevalence of childhood obesity is to prevent it. Hence, the issue of child obesity should be addressed and corrected during early child development, even as early as infancy. Infancy is the most important developmental stage in a person's life. Infants that are bottle and breastfed can be overfed (Boyse, 2006). Paying attention to the intake of breast milk or formula is crucial due to the fact that overfeeding an infant is plausible. As far as the stages of toddler hood to adolescence, parent's contribution is vital. During these stages of child development, eating habits begin. Therefore, children should not be introduced to fast food or junk food. Many Americans eat out with their children, as harmless as this may seem, kids grow accustomed to preferring this type of food than home cooked meals. Junk food can be found in our kitchen cabinets and are utilized for snacking or even more appalling, for replacing a course

meal. Introducing healthy eating habits, portion control, and limiting unhealthy foods can overall prevent child obesity.

Unfortunately, one in every five children is affected by obesity, providing reassurance that monitoring children's health is not being done. Obesity occurs and the factors are numerous. Poor eating habits, lack of exercise, overeating, family history of obesity, traumatic life events or changes, family or peer problems, personal insecurities, depression, negligence, or emotional problems can all contribute to childhood obesity (Odom, 2007). In accordance to this, the most notable reported cause of childhood obesity was related to over consumption of unhealthy food, parental responsibility, modern technology and the mass media (Belahsen, 2003).

Over consumption of unhealthy foods is when children eat too much of the foods that lack nutritional value. These foods can be high in fat, calories, sugar, starch, artificial preservatives, or chemicals. Parental responsibility is extremely important. A parent's influence on their children's everyday diet can mold a desirable eating pattern as far as quality and quantity. Modern technology has made it all too easy for Americans. A child can easily prepare his own food with kitchen appliances. This lack of difficulty enables parents to leave it up to the child to make their meals, which to a child's preference may include unhealthy foods. Even more, we may have foods, such as Kraft's Lunchables, which do not require any effort to make, but are packed with nothing more than fat, salt, and sugar (Arnel, 2006). As far as the mass media, it can easily be called the number one factor of obesity in children and adults. Mass media can include television, the fast food industry, and even the toy industry.

There are many risks and complications with obesity. Some consequences include increased risk of heart disease, poor academic performance, high blood pressure, shorter lifespan,

diabetes, respiratory complications, orthopedic problems, and trouble sleeping. Child obesity is also associated with increased risk of psychological problems. Depression, anxiety, and obsessive-compulsive disorders can also arise. Most children identify obesity as socially undesirable from a very early age from the media, television, family, and peers. This socially unaccepted condition drives obese children to self-consciousness and insecurities that can lead to something as alarming as suicide (Harper, 2007). Obesity takes the lives of numerous children a year, be it suicide or health problems. Studies also show that a child that is obese is seventy percent more likely to be obese later in their adult life (Reily, 2002).

Childhood obesity is the biggest health risk for young children these days. In the United States there has been a dramatic increase in the number of children who are obese. Children become obese because they are not actively involved after they get home from school. They spend five or six hours a day watching television, sitting on the computer, or playing video games. Schools need to teach the children that their health is a high priority in their lives and not video games or television. These children who are obese experience peer bullying, frustration, isolation, and therefore, they start to develop antisocial behavior. Obesity is a major epidemic, which has major developmental and behavioral problems. Childhood obesity can be a major long-term problem if it is not treated swiftly or properly.

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