

understand if these youth are at risk for obesity.

Regardless of the definition used, the number of overweight children in the United States has reportedly reached epidemic status ([Spruijt-Metz, 2011](#)). Approximately 12.7 million children are overweight or obese ([Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014a](#)). Numerous studies dating back to the early 1960s have documented childhood overweight through comprehensive evaluations of dietary intake, physical activity, and anthropometric measures (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention using the various National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys [NHANESs], I, II, III, and IV) ([Ogden, Carroll, Kit, et al, 2014](#); [Ogden, Carroll, and Flegal, 2008](#); [Ogden, Kuczmarski, Flegal, et al, 2002](#); [Ogden, Troiano, Briefel, et al, 1997](#)). In the 1960s and 1970s, childhood overweight remained fairly constant at approximately 4% to 5.5%. However, surveys during the 1990s and early 2000s demonstrated a steady climb to reach 17% in both children and adolescents ([Ogden, Carroll, Kit, et al, 2014](#); [Flegal, Carroll, Kit, et al, 2012](#)). This prevalence remains stable since 2003 but overall, the incidence remains high ([Ogden, Carroll, Kit, et al, 2014](#)). African-American and Hispanic children and youth are disproportionately represented by a higher prevalence of overweight and obesity (23.7% and 23.9%, respectively) compared with non-Hispanic white children (16.1%) ([Flegal, Carroll, Kit, et al, 2012](#)). Overall, adolescent Mexican-American boys and non-Hispanic black girls are at greatest risk with overweight/obesity prevalence rates of 46% and 45.1% respectively ([Flegal, Carroll, Kit, et al, 2012](#)).

Because adult obesity is associated with increased mortality and morbidity from a variety of complications, both physical and psychological, adolescent obesity is a serious condition. For the first time in United States history, the current generation of children will have a shorter life expectancy than their parents ([American Heart Association, 2014](#)). Overweight children and adolescents are at risk for continuing to be obese as adults, and they experience health and social consequences of obesity much earlier than children and adolescents of normal weight ([Van Cleave, Gortmaker, and Perrin, 2010](#)). Parental obesity increases the risk of overweight by twofold to threefold ([Altman and Wilfley, 2015](#)). The probability that overweight children will become obese adolescents is significant. In a large longitudinal study, overweight kindergartners were four