



**FIG 15-7** Snacking on empty calories is common among adolescents, especially during inactivity. (©2015 [iStock.com.](https://www.istock.com/))

Overeating or undereating during adolescence presents special problems. When they experience the normal increase in weight and fat deposition of the growth spurt, teenage girls often resort to dieting. The desire for a slim figure and a fear of becoming “fat” prompt teenage girls to embark on nutritionally inadequate reducing regimens that drain their energy and deprive their growing bodies of essential nutrients. Although most teens try to lose weight through exercise and diet, approximately 4.3% of adolescents engage in risky weight loss practices such as vomiting after meals or taking laxatives ([Eaton, Kann, Kinchen, et al, 2012](#)). Boys are less inclined to undereat or adopt risky weight loss practices. They are more concerned about gaining size and strength. However, they tend to eat foods high in calories but low in other essential nutrients.

Obesity is increasing among both children and adolescents in the United States. Poor dietary habits and increasingly sedentary lifestyles have caused this obesity epidemic. Currently 21% of children 12 to 19 years old are obese ([Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015](#)). The vast majority (90%) of obese adolescents remain obese into their 30s: 94% of women overall and 88% of men ([Gordon-Larsen, The, and Adair, 2010](#)).

Health problems traditionally thought of as adult comorbidities of obesity, including type 2 diabetes mellitus, obstructive sleep