

Kennedy Fields

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Comp II

31 March 2018

### Childhood Obesity

Childhood obesity can affect children's health for the rest of their lives. It can also be associated with adult obesity, and with many other health problems. Childhood obesity is a major concern for parents, teachers and medical community. Inactivity, genetics, technology and parenting attitudes are factors that may contribute to childhood obesity. Children will gain weight as they grow and develop. The problem is when a child has extra pounds not needed for normal growth and development. The effect of obesity in children is vital. Self-esteem and confidence of the youth are usually affected. A good understanding of the causes and some possible solutions could help us solve this issue.

Many people think obesity can be in the genes of parents, they are correct it's a possible risk. There is much evidence that an individual's genetic background is important in determining obesity risk. Some studies have found that BMI is 25-40% heritable.(Sahoo) The genetic factor accounts for less than 5% of cases of childhood obesity. (Sahoo) Parental genes are one risk factor that seems to be consistent predictor of the likelihood of obesity occurring in a child in the future. Time of breastfeeding also effects the occurrence of obesity. ("Causes and Consequences of Childhood Obesity.")The reduced time of breastfeeding actually increases the chances of child or baby developing obesity. An increase in weight or weight gain within 12 months increases risk at age of seven. (Wang)

Behaviors that influence excess weight gain include eating high calorie, low nutrient foods and beverages, not getting enough physical activity, activities such as watching too much television or other screen devices. Children tend to have similar eating habits and physical activity patterns as their parents. Computers, television and video games keep kids inside which means they burn fewer calories and are more likely to gain weight. Concerns about the safety of outside play and reliance on cars instead of walking helps. By preschool age many kids are already lacking enough activity, which often turns into poor exercise habits later in life.

There are many health consequences and problems associated with obesity. Doctors and scientist are concerned about the rise of obesity in children and teens because obesity may lead to health problems such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, asthma, and sleep apnea. There are certain genetic diseases and hormonal disorders that can predispose a child to obesity, such as hypothyroidism, Prader- Willi syndrome and Cushing syndrome. (“Family Health Guide.” ) Obese children and teens have been found to have risk factors for cardiovascular disease, including high cholesterol levels, high blood pressure, and abnormal glucose tolerance. (*National Archives and Records Administration* ) Studies show that obese children and teens are more likely to become obese as adults.

Finding comparing overweight children with normal with children in regards to self esteem have been mixed. Some studies have found that obese children have lower self esteem. (Sahoo) Research has consistently found that body satisfaction is higher in males than females at all ages. There is a relationship between body dissatisfaction and increasing BMI for girls while for boys a U-shaped suggests that boys with BMI at the low and high extremes experience high levels of body dissatisfaction. (Sahoo) The child develops a poor body image which contributes

to the development of eating disorders later in the child's life. This is very bad for teens or younger children. Children shouldn't have to worry about their body size or what others think of them if their parents give them the right lifestyle.

Balance is key in helping children maintain a healthy weight. Solutions that could stop the obesity rate in children from rising would be encourage healthy eating habits, make favorite dishes healthier, help kids stay active, be a better role model as a parent and reduce television, video games and internet access. You can do things like this by providing plenty of vegetables, fruits and whole grains, change up dishes make them taste good but healthier. Encourage kids or take kids on brisk walking, playing tag, jumping rope, playing soccer swimming or more playful activities. (*Preventing Childhood Obesity: Tips for Parents and Caretakers* ) Limit “screen time” to no more two hours a day. (*Preventing Childhood Obesity: Tips for Parents and Caretakers* ) Encourage your children to find activities to do with family members or on their own that simply involve activity. Parents should also be role models to their kids and show them that going outside is as much fun as watching television or scrolling on their iphones.

Childhood obesity is a common problem in today’s society due to behavioral and dietary changes. It has come more common due to the increase in the risk factors that cause obesity. However, it is possible to manage the problem through support and guidance from parents and schools. Make sure that your children, parents and upcoming parents understand the importance of stopping obesity, and ways of preventing it.

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