

## Obesity in Adolescents

Obesity and overweight are the second most major reasons of preventable deaths in America. Stagnant lifestyle and junk food is to be blamed for more than three hundred thousand deaths per annum. The sad thing is that this problem is on the rise. Obesity is a chronic disease which poses serious health risk to the health of an individual. Also, obesity is the easiest recognizable medical problem, but is very difficult to deal with.

People usually confuse obesity with overweight. Overweight is gaining of a few extra pounds. A person is considered obese when the total body weight is minimum ten percent more than the recommended weight for his/her body structure and height. According to an estimate every year hundred billion dollars are spent on the obesity problem. It is very important to treat the problem as early as possible. Obese children between the age of ten and thirteen have eighty percent chances of growing into obese adults, unless they change their ways and adopt a healthier lifestyle. The obesity problem starts from the age of five and continue till adolescence.

Obesity can be caused due to complex reasons including biological, genetic, cultural and behavioral factors. Usually a person gets obese when he/she consumes more calories than the body burns. Also there are fifty percent chances of becoming obese when both one of the parent is obese and when obesity has affected both the parents, the chances increases to eighty percent. One percent of obese people can have that fat because of health reasons, as obesity can be caused due to few medical disorders. The causes of obesity in adolescence are overeating, family history, bad eating habits, little or no exercise, medical illness, low self esteem, medications, depression, emotional problems, stressful life, and family problem.

Obesity can cause many major problems. Some of them are diabetes, sleeping disorders, high blood pressure, breathing problems, emotional problems and increase in heart disease risk. Teenagers are more prone to get emotional problems. Because of the weight, they develop low self esteem. They get into depression, obsessive compulsion disorder and anxiety.

Adolescents who want to tackle the obesity problem should approach a pediatrician who will thoroughly evaluate the cause. If no physical disorder is to be blamed, the weight is reduced by limiting the calorie intake and increasing physical activity. The doctor can advice a weight management program and change the eating habits of the teenager, slowly. The patient must avoid oily, fatty, fast and junk food. The portions must be reduced in order to decrease the calorie intake. If the adolescent has developed emotional problems

because of obesity, an adolescent psychiatrist can collaborate with the pediatrician in order to make a comprehensive plan for treatment. The plan includes reasonable goals, behavior modification, family participation, and management of physical activity.

Self motivation is extremely necessary in loosing weight. Because obesity is more a family problem and not an individual problem, the whole family can switch to eating healthy food and exercising regularly. This can make the weight control program a success. Parents can play a major role by boosting the self esteem of their children by concentrating on their strengths and encouraging them, instead of targeting the weight problem. The whole family should eat meals together, instead of eating individually while watching a movie. This helps all the members to focus on the food and the quantity being eaten. If the teenager isn't getting support from his family members, he/she can join support groups which can help towards the goals.

After the adolescent has lost weight, it is very important that he/she maintains it. In majority of the cases, people shift back to their old eating habits after loosing weight. That is the reason why obesity is more of a lifetime issue. So the main aim of any weight loss program must be make the adolescent like healthy food. He/she must also be made to exercise regularly, irrespective of the weight.

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