

# Childhood obesity in america

[Life](#), [Childhood](#)



Childhood Obesity in America Ashford University English Composition II ENG 122 Professor Harmon June 4, 2012 Childhood Obesity in America Childhood obesity is an important issue because of the shocking magnitude that this disease has reached in the past few years. Compared to other threats to children's health, childhood obesity has begun to rise tremendously. Certain genetic factors paired with changing lifestyles and cultures have produced children who are generally not as healthy as people were just a few decades ago.

According to Berg (2004), 15% of American children are overweight - three times as many as thirty years ago - and another 15% are at risk for overweight. The treatment and prevention of childhood obesity are considered the responsibility of individual children and their parents. Parents of obese children are left in a difficult position of fearing for the social and health consequences of their child's obesity, and fighting a losing battle against the powerful presence of the media and constant exposure to unhealthy foods.

It has been said that breastfeeding protects children from being obese or overweight; many people believe that "establishing healthy dietary behaviors must begin early in childhood. Mothers need education and support in healthy feeding and mealtime practices as part of a multi strategy response that targets early feeding as one potentially modifiable approach" (Horodyski, Baker, Coleman, Auld, & Lindau, 2011, p. 582. ) Whether breastfeeding is protecting against the increase of children who are overweight and obese remains a topic of dispute.

Although a number of evidence indicates that breastfeeding lowers the risk of obesity, these results are by no means final. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2012) states, in the United States, while 75% of mothers start out breastfeeding, only 13% of babies are exclusively breastfed at the end of 6 months. Does that mean that at the age of 6 months children are already falling into the category of being overweight? Many studies have been done, one in particular where “ nearly 300, 000 participants, showed that breastfeeding consistently reduced risks for overweight and obesity.

The greatest protection is seen when breastfeeding is exclusive (no formula or solid foods) and continues for more than three months” (California WIC Association, 2006, p. 2. ) The California WIC Association states that there are several possible reasons for the protective effect of breastfeeding against obesity, they are: ? Breastfed infants may be better at self-regulating their intake. Mothers can't see how much milk their child is drinking, so they must rely on their infant's behavior, not an empty bottle, to signal when their infant is full. Thus, breastfed babies might be better able to eat only as much as they need. Breastfed infants are more likely than formula-fed infants to try and to accept new foods. Acceptance of new foods is important because a healthy diet should include a wide variety of foods, especially fruits and vegetables. Because breast milk contains flavors from foods eaten by the mother, breastfed infants are exposed to a variety of tastes very early in life. In contrast, infant formula always tastes the same. ? Breastfeeding has different effects than formula feeding on infants' metabolism and on hormones such as insulin, which tells the body to store fat.

Formula-fed infants tend to be fatter than breastfed infants at 12 months of age. Other studies have shown that breast milk is more digestible than formula and that is why breastfeeding is better. According to Eiger (1999), in recent year's nutritionists have voiced concern about overly high levels of protein in the American diet. Since cow's milk contains about twice as much protein as human milk, formula-fed babies usually receive more protein than they need (much of it in the form of the less digestible casein).

The stools of formula-fed babies are so bulky because the babies cannot absorb so much protein, and excrete the excess in their stool, whereas breast-fed babies absorb virtually 100% of the protein in human milk. According to the CDC, " reports that the percentage of young people in the U. S. considered overweight has more than tripled since 1980. There has been a corresponding rise in the incidence of type 2 diabetes, a disease linked to overweight and obesity and once seen only rarely in children and teens. It is now widely accepted that being breastfed helps protect babies from becoming overweight or obese later in life" (WEBMD, 2006, para. 5. ) Although there have been several researches and studies done, there is still no proof that breastfeeding can help reduce the risk of childhood obesity. A year later more research was done with roughly 35, 000 participants. The conclusion to that research was that there was no link at all to breastfeeding and childhood obesity. Although breastfeeding protects a child from many things very early in life, it does not seem to protect against obesity through adolescence to adulthood.

Boyels (2007) states that breastfeeding is certainly encouraged, and has many positive consequences for both mother and child. But it should not be

promoted as a solution for either the childhood or adult obesity epidemic. Because of the lack of information linking breastfeeding to obesity, it is now said that the cause for obese and overweight children is lack of physical activity, lack of healthy foods in schools, advertising of unhealthy foods on television and billboards, limited access to healthy affordable foods, and limited access to safe places for children to play.

Childhood obesity became a very important issue many years ago when the number of obese children rose. It has been said that, " among children and adolescents ages 2 to 19, obesity tripled between 1980 and 2002 and more currently when First Lady Michelle Obama unveiled the White House Child Obesity Task Force action plan: Solving the Problem of Childhood Obesity Within a Generation. In the view of most doctors, these statistics are cause for concern because obesity is generally associated with increased risks for many diseases as well as premature death" (" Obesity Epidemic", 2010, para. . ) All of these health risks can be avoided if parents would communicate with their children about what they should and should not be eating. Children learn from their parents about what to eat and why it is important to eat certain foods. Breastfeeding is important to form a bond between mother and child, there have been many studies done to try and prove that breastfeeding a baby will help reduce the risk of obesity but all have come up with different results.

There are several solutions to this epidemic, parent need to talk with their children about what foods are good foods and what bad foods are, fruits are always a good choice and something that children love. Allot all children to a certain amount of TV time, 1 to 2 hours max, too much television is bad and

allows them to just sit around doing nothing. Allow children to run around and play, inside or outside, exercise is a good thing. Many children do not get enough exercise which contributes to obesity. Look into healthier foods at schools and child care centers.

This is where children spend a majority of their time. It is important that they have good, healthy foods to choose from. Lastly give children water instead of sugary drinks. Along with the recommendation previously listed and many listed online, there are many ways to help with the prevention of obesity. Berg (2004) stated that the seven sound and simple guidelines for raising healthy weight children are: 1. Normalize activity 2. Normalize eating 3. Balance sound nutrition 4. Feel good about oneself 5. Communicate feelings 6. Feel good about others . Balance the dimensions of wellness Following seven simple guidelines can help reduce overweight and obese children from becoming overweight and obese adults. Although obesity impacts lot's of people's lives in today's society, seeing people pass away from a preventable disease like obesity, in a world full of motivation and exercise is heart breaking. Living a healthy, fulfilling life style is important to a person's well being. All parents need to work together to decrease the number of obese children before this epidemic gets worse.

Obesity in children is a very serious issue and should not be taken lightly; many people do not take this issue as serious as they should be. Whether it is breastfeeding a baby or feeding a child the right foods, adults need to fulfill their jobs as parents towards their children. That means being a good role model for all children at all times. Children need to be taught and shown how to live a healthy lifestyle so they do not have to worry about having any

health conditions now or in the future. The only people that can help these children are their parents.

Every day the number of obese children increases, it is a sad but true statement. But by following the appropriate steps and working together with children, the childhood obesity rate will slowly but surely go down. A child's health should be the number one priority in every family's life. It is important to eat properly and exercise, a child's life could depend on it. When it comes down to it, breast-feeding could have a slight effect against obesity and that is supported by the epidemics evidence, but all of the research and data are still controversial.

Since breastfeeding has many benefits, no bad effects, and has no cost, it may signify a new and efficient way to satisfy the dramatically rising occurrence of obesity in the United States and elsewhere. However, its effects against childhood obesity still have to be confirmed and clarified. Till then it is the parent's responsibility to communicate and educate their children.

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