

# The issue of childhood obesity in america

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



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12/06/2011 America's Responsibility On October 19th, 2011 an 8 year old boy was removed from his home by officials from the state of Ohio. The parents are being tried for medical neglect. The child weighed 218 pounds at 8 years old. According to the Center For Disease Control, in 2007, approximately 13 million American children and adolescents were obese.

The effects of childhood obesity are both physical and emotional, not to mention preventable. According to the National Conference of State Legislation, obesity is defined as a body mass index (BMI) at or above the 95th percentile of the 2000 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for age growth charts. Dr. David S. Ludwig, M. D. , Ph. D. states in The New England Journal of Medicine in an article titled " Childhood Obesity---- The Shape of Things To Come", the physical complications of childhood obesity; fatty liver disease, high blood pressure, gastroesophageal reflux, orthopedic problems, insulin resistance, dyslipidemia, diabetes, sleep apnea, asthma, flat feet, back pain, exercise intolerance, and chronic cardiac inflammation. Obese children who remain obese as adults also have high incidences of death in their middle ages of adulthood.

The emotional and psychosocial costs are just as staggering and difficult to manage as the physical complications of childhood obesity. According to Dr. David S. Ludwig M. D. , Ph. D. , obese children typically are, socially isolated, have eating disorders, anxiety, and depression. If the obese child stays obese into adulthood they are less likely to complete college and are more likely to live in poverty. Jessica Gaude held the Guinness Book of World Records in 2009

for the fattest child in the world. At 5 years old Jessica was 200 pounds, her weight doubled by the time she was 7 years old.

She lost the ability to move as a regular person, her crushing weight too much for her seven year old frame to handle. She moved by scooting on her backside. Medical doctors enrolled Jessica in a specialty pediatric hospital in Virginia to assist Jessica in her weight lost battle. Through diet, exercise, therapy, determination, and emotional support Jessica managed to drop her extreme weight down to 150 pounds at 9 years old. In such extreme cases as Jessica's it would be advisable to have medical professionals involved every step of the way but it is possible to prevent these kinds of cases from becoming so big.

Older generations followed the "clean plate rule", as in a child is not finished eating until their plate is clean, according to the United States Department of Agriculture's website ChooseMyPlate. Gov, a child should no longer be forced to finish all of their food. Once the child is no longer hungry it is okay to allow them to leave the table. By forcing a child to eat parents and care givers are overriding the satiety sensation the brain receives when the stomach is full. Children's stomachs are smaller than adults therefore their portion sizes should accommodate the size of their stomach.

To assist with portion control it is important to realize that the back of an individual's fist is the correct size portion for that particular individual. Exercise is yet another way to prevent childhood obesity. Simply telling a child to go out and play does not work. If a child is the only child in the neighborhood the child will become bored and look to the parent(s) for

entertainment. Adults are busy people; schedules are always crammed with too many things to do in 24 hours. It is time that adults start scheduling in their children's well-being by having family exercise activities.

Instead of movie night try going for a walk. Enrolling children in sports improve not only physical health but psychosocial health as well. Sports allow the children to not only be physically active but it helps the child socialize, build new skills, self-confidence, and improves their overall self-image. Show support by doing the sport with the child on a parent/child team or volunteer to coach the sport the child is enrolled in. Either way presence is appreciated by the child as it shows the child the family is supportive. Education is the key to undertaking any change in life style.

By not only educating the parents but the children as well, the child is more likely to understand and cooperate. Once it is explained to the child, in an age appropriate manner, why eating healthy and being active is so important it gives the child a sense of power. According to Susan Okie, M. D. , and author of " Fed Up! Winning the War Against Childhood Obesity", allowing the child choices that are healthy helps give back some of the control that the child may feel he/she lost in the change. Food Charts designed specifically for children in the early school years, Pre-K to first grade, help the child make educated decisions.

Instead of using the old food pyramid or ChooseMyPlate. gov listing items high in fat and sugar content as " red food", items high in fat or high in sugar as " yellow food" , and items low in fat and sugar as " green food" helps them make their decisions. Allow the child to have an item from the " red

food” list once a week, items from the “ yellow food” list two to three times a week, and items in the “ green food” list every day of the week. This may help a child in early grade school better understand the importance of eating healthy and it will make it fun.

Instead of waiting until the last minute to figure out what to feed the family for dinner during the week, make a weekly meal plan. Go grocery shopping for the entire week and get all the necessary ingredients for each nightly meal. This decreases the urge to go for convenience like the drive-through offers. This sounds like a good idea but it is not always practical to eat in every night. Paula Ford- Martin, author of “ The Everything Parent’s Guide To The Overweight Child”, realizes that like it or not eating out is an American norm.

Paula Ford-Martin suggests skipping the drive through and going to a sit down restaurant as they offer more choices that are healthier. Also these types of eating establishments usually have menu items that are able to be cooked to an individual’s specifications. Besides the better choices offered the nutritional information is usually easier to access. An individual can ask their server what types of oils are used in preparing the food, this helps to make more educated and healthy choices for the child. Also it is possible to substitute items on the menu.

If a child orders macaroni and cheese and gets a side to accompany the main dish skip the fries and order fresh fruit or steamed vegetables. When eating out be aware that the children’s menu is not always the healthiest choice for the children. According to Paula Ford-Martin’s book, the kids menu

is filled with deep fried chicken nuggets, hamburgers, fries, and hot dogs. The portions may be more appropriate but it is possible to have your child order from the adult menu and only get half of the adult portion, just ask the servers to box up half of the portion before the meal is served.