

# Childhood obesity is a problem essay sample

[Health & Medicine](#), [Obesity](#)



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## **Introduction**

Childhood obesity has become a global epidemic and is proving to be a serious problem in this nation. Recently, Nagai and Moritani (2004) drew the nation's attention to a problem that has been overlooked for years. They provide statistics of children and adolescents who are overweight. The data shows that Children's weight at the age 6 years to 11 years has doubled, and adolescence's weight has tripled as compared to previous decade and this is a result of lack of exercise and overeating.

Overeating and lack of exercise causes childhood obesity and the outcome of childhood obesity is very severe; they are susceptible to major diseases such as type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, strokes and hypertension. Freedman et al (2004.) did research on the issue of diseases related to childhood obesity and the results revealed that obese children are at high risk of all these diseases. There are also some psychological problems associated with

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childhood obesity such as depression, lower self esteem and emotional imbalance. Therefore, the best way to solve this problem is early prevention.

Preventing childhood obesity is important because it will help the children maintain a healthy weight and build a natural defence against related diseases. One can keep away obesity in children through a balance diet and by ensuring some physical exercise on regular basis.

### **Maintain a healthy weight**

In this research, the main focus will be on the importance of preventing childhood obesity. The question is why is preventing childhood obesity is very important? As stated earlier, it will help the children maintain a healthy weight and build a natural defence against related diseases; both issues will be analyzed based on regular physical activity and a healthy diet.

Since there is no promising medical treatment yet for childhood obesity, we need to prevent it through a healthy diet. The healthy diet as recommended by USDA(2005) dietary guidelines for children (Okie, P 102) is 2-3 servings of dairy products per day, fruits and vegetables for snack, 2-3 servings of whole grain food. For example, these food groups are the groups with low glycemic index. Some processed food such as white flour products, like cookies, cupcakes, donuts, and pies are high glycemic food.

### **Cookies are food to be avoided**

Cookies digest quickly the glucose which results in high calories. Such food arouses hunger in children very often and this may lead to overeating in children. Such food items should be avoided or served in small portions very rarely or occasionally, especially to overweight children. Non or low fat dairy

products reduce the risk of overweight or obesity and insulin resistance because they have low glycemic index and they may enhance satiety. ( Okie, P 103.)

Whenever children keep on eating and they are not physically active, they gain weight because the body has the natural ability to regulate and maintain weight. Weight is measured based on the body mass index (BMI ). The tendency for some children to gain weight is very high and this is as a result of metabolic disorder, therefore, children with metabolic disorder have insulin resistant problem and their body cannot breakdown glucose and nutrients effectively while at rest. Children who suffer from this problem should be given small quantity of food with different variety including fruits and vegetables. Also food with low calorie density and high energy nutrients should be given more instead of high calories and low nutrient food. For example, junk food items such as hamburgers, pizzas are high calorie food products and they increase the daily calorie intake of children and hence should not be a part of regular meals.

Whenever children eat, they receive energy in their body in the form of fuel and they are ready to use it. This energy level is based on what kind of food they eat and the amount of calories they receive from the food products. Every food has calories, but their calorie levels differ depending on the diet chart. Food products that are full of dietary sugar such as cookies, candy and donuts are examples of high dense calories and poor nutrient quality. We should in mind the daily calorie requirement of children while feeding them or planning a menu for them. Ram et al (2004.) "

Tested metabolic syndrome in children based on the ability of their body to break down glucose." They found that in some children glucose breakdowns more quickly as compared to others.

As parents especially mothers who are like role models to their children, they should inculcate in them the right eating habits, educate them regarding healthy and unhealthy food items so that they make the right choice themselves. Wendy (2003.) explains that " giving children balanced nutrition both at home and at school will control children's weight and reduce obesity epidemic."

Besides a healthy diet, physical activity is also very important in maintaining their body weight. Regular exercise is a must to develop natural ability to balance energy intake and energy released. Ram et al ( 2004) researched that metabolic syndrome is the major cause of obesity in children and children who are involved in vigorous or endurance activities have improved level of metabolism. This is the main reason why exercise is very important to activate their Autonomic nervous system (Nagai and Moritani, 2004.)

Regular physical exercise regulates and maintains proper body weight, depending on their activity level and their physique. One can also improve the activity level in children by allowing them to spend more time playing outside the house, riding bikes, running, jumping and even skipping their rope in the yard rather than keeping them indoors all day without any exercise. Also, children who exercise daily are more active physically and are more excited in playing games during normal routines as well. Institute of Medicine and National Association of Sports and physical Education call

for " children to accumulate a minimum of 60 min of moderate or vigorous physical activity each day" (Okie P 118.) Everything that children do to move their muscles right from the time they wake up until they sleep at night is physical activity.

Such activities include doing house chores, climbing stairs in the house, dancing and even playing sports at school. Developing various ways to keep the children active is the central key to prevent childhood obesity. In order to have a balanced energy, their body must be able to breakdown and store fat at regular intervals and this is done through regular exercise. Continuously, breaking down of stored fat will built their muscle mass and improve their physical fitness. This will ultimately improve their heart rate and this means that, even at rest their body continues to breakdown nutrients. Once this happens, the body develops its natural way of regulating fat and keep the children healthy.

### **Build a natural defence against related diseases**

Preventing childhood obesity helps to build natural defence against related diseases such as heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, hypertension high blood pressure and various kinds of cancers. Freedman et al explain that carotid intima-media thickness in adult is a result of childhood obesity. Basically, healthy diet and balanced nutrition contribute to natural disease prevention researchers as revealed that feeding the children with fruits and vegetables reduces the risk of heart diseases, stroke type 2 diabetes and various kinds of cancers. For example most green leafy vegetables are very

high in insoluble fibre and they provide fewer calories along with abundance vitamins and natural anticancer substances.(Okie p104.)

Also making good food choices reduce the risk for several diseases like metabolic syndrome. For instance, by switching from cornflakes to brown rice, whole wheat or wheat rye cereals will reduce overweight because this type of whole grain foods are very rich in fibre and a high fibre diet reduces the risk of obesity and prevents constipation in children.

All fruits are rich in different vitamins and minerals so it is very important to give children all types of fruits and vegetables to help meet their daily nutritional needs. As they develop good eating habits, it will reduce obesity and will highly improve their health. For example you can prepare a mixture of sunflower seeds, cut baby carrots and raisins with regular meals. Meeting daily nutritional needs will also help boost immune system in children. Wolfe (2003) said " it is very important to teach parents and daycares' providers how to prepare healthy meal and snack for their children".

Furthermore, preventing childhood obesity is very important because it will reduce medical cost of obesity treatment and the related disorders.

According to Nakaya (2006, P 40.), the total amount of treatment cost of obesity in USA is \$117 billion a year. The cost of treating obesity related diseases now exceeds the cost of tobacco and alcohol related diseases combined together. Hence, it will be better to prevent childhood obesity rather than overlook the problem and then spend a huge amount of money on treatment. The cost of treatment for obesity covers: medication cost,

behavioural therapies such as counseling, nutritional education fitness and weight loss programs.

## **Conclusion**

All in all, childhood obesity requires aggressive action and prevention at an early stage as soon as regular check up for children signals that they are overweight. They should immediately be given healthy nutritional diet followed by regular physical activity. Immediate prevention of childhood obesity will help eliminate other related diseases as well such as hypertension, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, stroke etc. This will in turn save the medical treatment cost as well. Preventing childhood obesity epidemic is very important for an individual, society and the entire world. We will be able to safeguard the next generation from the associated diseases. In this way, parents and care-takers can lend a helping hand in providing a better quality life to children today and tomorrow.

## **Related Readings**

Importance of Balance Diets: This article talks about how balance diet will protection over disease and improve proper sleep.

Advocating for the Prevention of Childhood Obesity: A Call to Action for Nursing:

This article is asking nurses to take a lead in preventing childhood obesity in the society. It said, as part of their care to their patients they should contribute to reducing childhood obesity by educating parents, school system and the community about action to take to prevent childhood obesity.

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Excessive Eating: This book explain the role that emotion and environment play in people eating habit and food choice pattern. Also, it talks about how overeating can leads to overweight and obesity.

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