

Childhood obesity and parental influences

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



? Childhood Obesity and Parental Influence Kimberly Brown English 122

Instructor : Cathy Cousar December 9, 2011 Childhood Obesity and Parental Influence Let there be no mistake, obesity is a disease! Studies show obesity is a major issue in America today. Approximately 17% of children and adolescents aged 2—19 years are obese (Center for Disease Control, 2006). This is an ongoing epidemic and grows more and more troublesome as technology increases. There are several causes of childhood obesity, such as, nutritional and eating habits, genetics, physical inactivity, and/or economic status and race, but last and not least, parental influence.

It is a fact, times have changed. As technology increases so does the seriousness of childhood obesity. Children are spending more time in front of the television or computer and less time engaging in physical activities. Although television and video games can stir the imagination they should not be a substitute for active “ playing” or essential daily exercise. Parents should and can influence their children greatly by minimizing the amount of time a child spends watching television, researching on the internet or playing video games by planning activities with their children.

A recent examination of the Department of Education’s Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey (ECLS-K) found that a one-hour increase in physical education per week resulted in a 0. 31 point drop (approximately 1. 8%) in body mass index among overweight and at-risk first grade girls. There was a smaller decrease for boys. The study concluded that expanding physical education in kindergarten to at least five hours per week could reduce the percentage of girls classified as overweight from 9. 8 to 5. 6 percent (Datar & Sturm 2004) .

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A significant relationship was found between childhood obesity and computer usage, television watching, total hours in sedentary behavior, and maternal BMI. An indirect significant relationship with childhood obesity was also shown if a parent was home when the child got home from school and if a father participated in exercise with their child. Caloric intake, total time in physical activity, demographic variables, and father's BMI showed no significant relationship with children's BMI.

Interventions should be designed targeting total time spent on the computer, total time watching television, and maternal obesity in child obesity programs (Military Medicine 2003). Another contributing factor to childhood obesity is how early a parent instills values of healthy eating. Healthy eating habits can be introduced as early as infancy. Parents need to be watchful and provide healthy food choices majority of the time for meals and snacks so that children will become used to these as the "normal" food choices (Cayman Free Press).

When healthy foods or healthy eating habits are not the "norm" children will almost always develop unhealthy eating habits. These habits will be lasting and often carry over into adulthood. There is increasing interest in the role of parenting in determining the early behaviors related to pediatric overweight (Ontai, Bitchier, Williams, Young, & Townsend, 2009). The family's influence on childhood and adolescent obesity ranges from serious and dangerous factors, such as neglect and abuse (Williamson, Thompson, Anda, Dietz, &

Felitti, 2002), to the more benign factors, such as non supportive home environments and poor shared family health habits.

Recent research indicates that children who were neglected are 50 percent more likely to become obese compared with children who were not neglected (Whitaker, Phillips, Orzol, & Burdette, 2007). This is consistent with earlier studies that found that children who were neglected at age nine or 10 were 7.1 times more likely to be obese at age 20 (Lissau & Sorensen, 1994). It is hypothesized that these children overeat as a means of finding comfort and, therefore, become obese in the process (Parsons, Power, Logan, & Summerbell, 1999).

Parental influence on child Childhood Obesity and Parental Influence physical activity is transmitted through role modeling and belief in the child's ability (Bois, Sarrazin, Brustad, Trouilloud, & Cury, 2005). As researchers continue to analyze the role of parenting both in the development of childhood overweight and in obesity prevention, studies of child nutrition and growth are detailing the ways in which parents affect their children's development of food- and activity-related behaviors.

Ana Lindsay, Katarina Sussner, Juhee Kim, and Steven Gortmaker argue that interventions aimed at preventing childhood overweight and obesity should involve parents as important forces for change in their children's behaviors (Lindsay, Sussner & Kim). It is important for parents to attribute to their child's healthy weight by limiting the amount of time a child spends on "lazy" activities, by introducing healthy food and healthy eating habits at an

early age and also remembering that that our children are observing our eating and physical habits.

It has become imperative in this day and age for parents and the role models in our children's lives to place more value on the need for exercise and healthy eating habits. I understand how technological our youth has become and I believe this greatly contributes to the growing problem in our nation. That is why it is important for us to execute plans of strategy to get our youth more physically productive. Also, not only do these children become targets of bullying but they are also subjected to a lifelong battle with food and possibly health issues.

I feel it is crucial to make it known that parents are responsible for their children, in more ways than one. I do understand that we [parents] cannot always be there, but positive eating habits can and will Childhood Obesity and Parental Influence last a child throughout their adulthood if started at an early age. Until we, as the role models in our youth's life, accept this responsibility it will continue to grow as a national epidemic. It is our responsibility to set good examples and give our children the correct information on living happy and healthy lives.

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