

# Houston: childhood obesity and the impact

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



Childhood obesity has increased significantly over the years. Most importantly, children in Houston area are experiencing a short lifespan compared to their parent due to them being obese and overweight. Just like the many communities in the United States are concerned with their health issues, Houston County as well as concerned with the nutritional health of its people especially children. Notably, it is approximated that about 34 percent of Houston County children who are aged between 12 years and over are obese (Bunting et al., 2011). Usually, the primary cause of childhood obesity is considered to be an imbalance amounting to calories consumed as well as the intensity of physical activity a child is exposed to. Nevertheless, there are numerous environmental effects which influence a child's possible to sustain a healthy weight. Consequently, the fundamental effects that affect childhood obesity can be categorized as biological and nonbiological. The biological effects such as gender, age, genetic form, child development, and disease states. The nonbiological factors include social and economic state whereby poverty play a significant part in childhood obesity in this case. As a result, childhood obesity levels in Houston county are high in societies with high rates of minorities and individuals living in poverty (Schoonover & Lagomarsino, 2005). In most cases, the poor communities within this area have less access to healthy nutrition and few opportunities to participate in physical activities.

### **Negative impacts of childhood obesity in Houston**

Obesity has adverse effects on children's health. Furthermore, child obesity rises the financial costs of the local healthcare facilities in Houston County. Notably, in 2001 it is noted that the financial cost of childhood obesity was

approximated as 10 billion dollars. The figure is projected to increase to 40 billion dollars in the coming years which shows the considerable increase in childhood obesity over the years (Bunting et al., 2011). These facts offer a challenge on the steps being undertaken by the Houston County community in taking care of their children. In fact, childhood obesity is a health nutrition problem that is linked to numerous causes. Specifically, in Houston County, there are different initiatives that influence childhood obesity particularly families' access to healthy nutritional food as well as the opportunity for these children to participate in physical activities are minimal (Schoonover & Lagomarsino, 2005). As a result, many children who are born in Houston County have a short lifespan compared to that of their guardians (Richards, & University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, 2007). Besides, obese children have a high likelihood of contract a number of diseases, for example, hypertension, stroke, cancer, as well as diabetes.

Today, in the United States it is estimated that 50 percent of the children aged between 2 to 9 years are obese according to National Health and Nutrition report released in 2010. Indeed, the report concludes that about one in three children will contract diabetes (Jhamb, Franzini, Sharma, 2011). On the other hand, 34 percent of Houston County children who are aged between 12 years and over are obese (Bunting et al., 2011). The alarming results indicate that obese children are at a high risk of developing health problems which at long run will lead to high medical costs.

### **Existing institutions that will help treat the nutrition health problem**

Childhood obesity is an issue in Houston County that has numerous negative effects on the child growth and development. For this reason, the treatment

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approach to this problem must be faced by integrating multiple programs and institutions that are interested in this subject. Notably, to effectively create an efficient transformation in the settings that influence children, education institution, community development departments, public health, business community as well as families must work in collaboration to facilitate every child in Houston County lives a healthy and prolific life (Katz, 2010). Various programs and institutions whether public or private are set up which assist in addressing the childhood obesity problem in Houston County. Some of the policies set up by governmental organizations contribute significantly to solving the childhood obesity problem in Houston County. In this case, approaching childhood obesity through the set-up plans to facilitate change across various programs and populations. Besides, policies enhance a more extensive implementation of standards which create a healthy enabling environment in the society, schools, and in the healthcare facilities.

### **Strategies to help solve the problem**

The fundamental goal is to develop strategic plans that reduce childhood obesity in Houston County. The program incorporates both short term actions which require immediate implementation, and long-term effects. Notably, the first initiative is to create a collaborative opportunity to involve and educate the stakeholders in the community. This will raise awareness about childhood obesity specifically the effect of obesity and its significance in various sector. Through community stakeholder integration, it is possible to seek prioritized solutions to childhood obesity in Houston County (Hammer & University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, 2012). In most

cases, the collaborative strategy aims at achieving various objective based on the available public health facilities in Houston County (Katz, 2010). The first object is creating awareness through the partnership with the community stakeholders who are interested in nutritional health matters in the country. Secondly, promoting and providing learning opportunities which are related to childhood obesity. Moreover, developing a community-based action facility which will serve as an instrument to facilitate the implementation of strategies.

Another important strategy which will assist in solving the problem is to endorse and establish clear guidelines to educate school teachers and childcare facilitators on how to eat healthy nutritional food thereby serving as a role model to children (Institute of Medicine (U. S.) et al., 2005). Besides, in collaboration with community stakeholders, will conduct campaigns to support healthy nutritional diet for families and specifically children. Notably, this will also require an expansion of the community awareness programs which are already in existence in Houston. Expanding these facilities will facilitate a rise in the various programs taught to the community on various ways of cooking healthy nutritious food.

Through principled communication with school administrators, encourage schools to increase awareness of the importance of healthy food to children within the school districts (Hammer & University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, 2012, p. xx). Besides, enhance school officials to advocate for low calorie, low-fat content food, and drinks in schools and other children facilities. On the same note, establish additional facilities

within designated areas in Houston where children can do physical activities when they are not in school. In this case, enhance Houston director of education to advocate for outdoor activities whereby the children will be around to visit the established facilities on a daily basis to maximumly utilize their physical activities (Bunting et al., 2011).

### **Assessment plans for solving the problem**

The assessment techniques are designed to determine the cause of childhood obesity in Houston community. The research, therefore, will involve collecting data about how secure are the communities access to healthy nutritious food. Notably, utilizing geographical data available, we are able to determine the existing facilities where children can undertake their physical activities (Smith, 1999). Besides, carry out a critical evaluation of the food system present in Houston County.

Consequently, interview childcare providers as well as school administrators about the policies and approaches they use to support nutritional health and child physical aid in order to evaluate the contribution they make in reducing childhood obesity (Institute of Medicine (U. S.) et al., 2005). Multiple data sources, as well as community discussion with stakeholders, will facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the challenges linked to childhood obesity and seek a prioritized solution to these problems.

In conclusion, understanding the healthy patterns in this area will contribute effectively in deriving a solution to childhood obesity in Houston County. In this case, random sampling will be conducted to select several neighborhoods which will be assessed. Carrying out a comprehensive

assessment of the dietary behaviors will assist determine the challenges experienced in achieving a healthy nutritional diet in this area (Smith, 1999). Here, the use of maps will aid in the random selection of the neighborhoods to be assessed and also guarantee that the individuals reside in that particular area. On the other hand, involve parents or guardians in discussions to gather their response about the challenges they experience in attaining a healthy diet as well as being physically active (Institute of Medicine (U. S.) et al., 2005). Finally, request the parents to recommend policies or practices that should be set up to help them keep their children healthy and reduce childhood obesity in Houston County at large.