

Reducing obesity in children essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

For the last twenty years, the number of obese children in the United States. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), obesity is a condition characterized by excessive accumulation of fat which presents potential risks to the health of the child. In order to determine whether a child is overweight or not, their body mass index (BMI) is measured. The weight of the person is divided by the square of their height. Once the BMI reaches over 25, the child is overweight. If it exceeds over 30 BMI, then this is what is called obesity(World Health Organization, nd).

Obesity and overweight can bring about a number of complications such as diabetes, cancer, and cardiovascular diseases. Originally, obesity was a cause of concern in countries with high income. Presently, however, it is a growing problem in low and middle income states especially in the urban regions(World Health Organization, nd). Factors that brought about Obesity in Children According to the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, there are various factors that led to the increase in rate of obesity in children.

These may include social, environmental and policy factors that can have an impact on the eating and physical activity of the child. The following are the factors that brought about childhood obesity(Institute of Medicine, nd):

- Urban and suburban infrastructure that discourage walking and other physical tasks
- Family pressure concerning reduction of food expenses, time of acquisition and preparation, thereby causing the frequent taking of convenience foods which are rich in calories and fats
- Minimal access and availability of fruits, vegetables, and other foods rich in nutrients

Reduced opportunities for physical fitness activities at school and after school as well

as lesser chance to walk or ride a bike going to school and home. •

Substitution of playing outdoor activities due with indoor games such as watching television or playing video and computer games.

In order to reduce the incidence of obesity in children, there is a need for them to burn what they eat daily. If the child is exposed to long periods of inactivity and loves to eat a lot, then excess fat is not utilized and is kept in the body which can bring about imbalance in the body(Ursinus College, nd).

Should the School Expand Physical Education to Reduce Obesity? In the United States, childhood obesity rate among preschool children aged 2 to 5 years and adolescents 12 - 19 years old have doubled and tripled in children 6 to 11 years old. Presently, close to nine million children 6 years or older are suffering from obesity. Translating these facts into figures, 15. 8 percent of children aged 6 to 11 years old are overweight and 31. 2% are in danger of being overweight. In adolescents 12 to 19 years of age, 16. 1% are overweight as opposed to 30. % who are in danger of being overweight(Institute of Medicine, nd).

According to the Institute on Medicines, an obese child is prone to suffering from psychosocial problems that can bring about low self-esteem and may have an impact on how they will perform academically and socially(Institute of Medicines, nd). Aside from the social stigma of obesity, the possibility of suffering from type 2 diabetes throughout their lifetime is at 30 percent for males and 40 percent for females. The prevalence of type 2 diabetes is greater among ethnic groups(Institute of Medicines, nd).

Because of the increasing prevalence of obesity among school children, calls for initiating the school curriculum of public schools have been intensifying. From 1991 to 2003, high school enrollment in physical education classes have recorded a considerable drop from 41.6% to 28.4%. Opportunities for physical activity going to and from the school has dropped as well compared to the past. Only 1/3 of trips to school are done by biking or walking. Recess time in some elementary schools have also been lessened or scratched off from the curriculum(Pate et al, 2004).

For several years, public health, medical, and educational experts have clamored for more opportunities to engage in physical activities for children. Recent suggestions call for an expansion of the physical education program. Likewise, professional agencies have demanded that schools adhere to providing quality physical education program. The bad news is that only a handful of schools in the United States have addressed the issue and there are few indications that schools are set to follow these recommendations(Pate et al, 2004). The Schools Should Not Expand Physical Education To Reduce Obesity?

According to the National Association for Sports and Physical Education (NASPE), obesity in childhood begins at infancy. Limiting an infant to strollers and play pens may be reducing the child's physical capability. The agency believes that infants should be given an opportunity for physical activities early in their lives. The earlier they enjoy being active, the better is their appreciation of doing physical tasks such as running, walking, and biking. NASPE recommends that the surrounding should be safe and will not limit the movement of the infant for extended periods of time.

During their toddler years, NASPE recommends at least half an hour of physical activity while during preschool, it should be done for at least an hour(Ursinus College, nd). In an article written by Jim Wooten, he clearly pointed out that it is not the job of the school to reduce obesity among its students. This was his reaction to Senate Bill 506, which was filed by Sen. Joe Carter, seeking for the declaration of schools that do not pass the state minimum in physical education curriculum as “ unhealthy zone.

According to Wooten, giving the job of policing food intake will be quite costly since letting the task will require removal of soft drink machines, reducing calorie-rich foods in the school canteen, as well as hiring nutritionists, dieticians, and physical education advisors. He further said that it is the job of the family to check the diet lifestyle of their children(Wooten, 2008). Today, most schools have placed more focus on taking tests and improving the intelligence levels of students and have veered away from the idea of developing a healthy mind and body(Ursinus College, nd).

According to the World Health Organization, addressing obesity requires political leadership and policy change. If there is a need for a law that will remove vending machines in school, and promote health education, then it is the government who should initiate moves(Swinburn, 2008). Government Efforts To Reduce Obesity Realizing the need to drastically turnaround obesity rates, the government through Congress and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have stepped up its drive to reduce the rate of obesity among children.

After obtaining the results of the Child and Adolescent Trial for Cardiovascular Health conducted by the Institute of Medicine, various measures are now being undertaken across the United States. Some of the activities include creating laws focusing on requiring schools to offer physical education as well as establishing nutrition guidelines for food and beverages being sold in schools. Part of the legislation will be putting up of policies that will expand bike paths and improve recreational centers(Arehart-Treichel, 2004).

In addition, a measure seeking the President's help in asking the Department of Health and Human Services to set up a high-level task force that would design goals for combating obesity among children(Arehart-Treichel, 2004). Furthermore, the new measures will call for medical organizations making prevention of obesity in children as a high-priority goal. Likewise, since there are no existing laws limiting the selling of unhealthy foods, Congress will initiate such laws as it could reduce obesity in children(Arehart-Treichel, 2004).

Finally, more research on obesity shall be conducted, particularly on the aspect of improvement of dietary and physical lifestyle(Arehart-Treichel, 2004). Alternatives to Physical Education Since public schools have insufficient time and resources to provide physical education in their curriculum, the idea of " health-related PE" have been pushed. Several health-related activities that integrate physical activity with proper nutrition has been implemented in the United States.

These approaches are focused on behavior modification, with the inclusion of physical tasks. Among the programs that implemented the physical activity intervention approach are the Child and Adolescent Trial for Cardiovascular Health (CATCH), Lifestyle Education for Activity Program (LEAP), Sports, Play, and Active Recreation for Kids (SPARK), among others(Pate et al, 2006).

These approaches have been implemented in the elementary school and participated in by students from grades 3 to 6 and some of these programs combined students from all grade levels.

These approaches are focused on intervening on risk factors brought about by cardiovascular diseases. Changes were implemented on the PE and health curriculum as well as some food service programs and incorporated family, community, and policy change aspects(Pate et al, 2006). In schools where the M-SPAN approach was implemented, involvement in physical activity went up by 18%. In the case of schools where Planet Health was implemented, incidence of obesity among girls was decreased as well as in watching television(Pate et al, 2006).

Most of these approaches are geared towards improving physical fitness activities during school days. It is likely that students who improved on their physical activity may offset the increase in school physical activity by reducing their physical activities outside school. There is still a need for further research in order to verify the connection between in-school and out-of-school activities. Likewise, there is still a need to prove whether or not intervention programs can lower the BMI or likelihood of obesity(Pate et al, 2006).

Conclusion Based on the evidence, it is quite clear that there is a great need for schools to revise their physical education program as a measure for controlling obesity. The growth of the disease is so alarming that obesity has grown to become an epidemic. The school, government, and family must pool their efforts in making sure that the eating habits of their child is in check and that they engage in physical activity so that they will burn the fats and prevent the prevalence of obesity.

References

<http://www.who.int/topics/obesity/en/>