

Childhood Obesity—An American Epidemic

Today about 1 in 3 children and youth (ages 2-19) in the United States are already overweight or obese. Overweight kids are more likely to become overweight adults. Some experts believe that if obesity among kids continues to increase at this rate, our current generation could become the FIRST in American history to live shorter lives than their parents.

THE FACTS

1. Obese & Overweight Children are at Risk for Serious Health Problems

Diabetes on the rise: Type 2 diabetes used to be called “adult-onset diabetes.” Now, the rise in childhood obesity is linked to a dramatic rise in the number of children suffering from type 2 diabetes.

Higher risk of asthma: There may be a link between the rise in childhood obesity and the rise in childhood asthma. Extra weight can make it harder to breathe and can inflame the respiratory tract. Children with serious asthma are more likely to be overweight.

Increased risk of heart failure: Being overweight or out of shape makes the heart work harder. Overweight children are more likely to grow up to be overweight adults and more likely to develop heart problems.

2. Access to Healthy Food and Physical Activity is Disappearing

Poor nutrition: Only about 20 percent of high school seniors report eating fruit and green vegetables five or more times a day.

Unregulated nutrition: Foods offered in school vending machines are often of little nutritional value and can be loaded with fats, sugars, salt and calories.

Less physical education: 92% of elementary schools do not have daily physical education classes year-round. About 1/3 of high school students take daily physical education classes.

Disappearing recess: Nearly one-third of elementary schools do not schedule recess on a regular basis. Some schools lack the space to play while others feel that recess is a waste of time.

3. Different Economic, Racial, and Ethnic Groups are More at Risk

Poor health care: More than 1.6 million children were unable to get needed medical care because the family could not afford it. Medical care for an additional 3 million children was delayed because of worry about the cost.

Limited access: In part because they lack access to healthy food and sports facilities, children from lower incomes are more likely to be overweight or obese.

Skyrocketing diabetes risk: African American and Hispanic children are developing type 2 diabetes at much higher rates than their Caucasian peers. Almost half are at risk of developing diabetes.

The Alliance for a Healthier Generation provides real tools, solutions, and guidance to help kids grow up healthier and happier. To learn how you can get involved, visit **HealthierGeneration.org**