Childhood Obesity

Key Facts
1. **Children who are overweight or obese have lower self-esteem than their normal-weight peers** (Strauss, 2000). Parents must help their children understand that their physical appearance is not the primary contributor to self-worth. Parents of obese children need to be aware that their children may experience increased feelings of loneliness, sadness, and nervousness. As they get older, children who are obese were more likely to participate in high-risk behaviors such as smoking, alcohol, or drug use (Strauss, 2000). Parents should monitor their children and encourage them to engage in activities that are not high-risk.

2. **Children are more likely to participate in physically active recreation when their parents are involved as well**. (Lau, Fox, and Cheung, 2005). When children can participate in active recreation with their parents, they are more likely to continue these activities as they grow older. If parents make healthful lifestyle choices, their children are more likely to continue to participate in physical activity once they are adults. Families should try to participate in physical activity together so children understand the importance of a healthful lifestyle.

3. **Fathers play a critical role in children’s understanding of living a healthful lifestyle** (Snethen, et al., 2008). Both parents should demonstrate healthful living habits to their children; however, fathers are especially critical in setting examples for children’s lifestyle choices. Children who see their father watching more than five hours of television a day are more likely to be heavy television viewers as adults (Snethen, et al., 2008). Likewise, when children see their fathers eating most of the fruits and vegetables on their plates at meals, they are more likely to do so as well (Snethen, et al., 2008). Families should eat meals together whenever possible so children can learn the importance of a well-balanced diet.

4. **Children are exposed to significant amounts of advertisements for fast-food and high-calorie junk food** (Thompson, Flores, Ebel, and Christakis, 2008). The prevalence of advertisements for unhealthful food choices during children’s television programming encourages them to prefer these foods (Thompson, et al., 2008). Studies have shown the more television a child watches, the higher his or her preference for foods advertised during their viewing (Thompson, et al., 2008). If possible, parents should limit their children’s television viewing and encourage more active play. In addition, if parents watch these programs with their children they can reinforce the importance of healthful dietary practices and discuss why many of the advertised foods may not be good choices.

Implications for Parents

**Let’s Move** ([http://www.letsmove.gov/](http://www.letsmove.gov/)): This website, started as a result of Michelle Obama’s ambition to combat childhood obesity, provides resources for promoting healthful diets and physical activity. Parents can find resources to help them.

**My Pyramid** ([http://www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov)): Parents can look up what an appropriate diet looks like for both themselves and their children. Dietary guidelines and activities to promote healthful diets are available for both adults and children.

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Works Cited


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