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Childhood Obesity

Q&A *

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(*) Source: CDC

Is childhood obesity a serious problem?

It sure is. Let's first look at ages 2 to 19 - "kids" - nationwide:

- One in six are obese
- A generation ago this rate was three times lower
- For low-income, pre-school age kids obesity rate is one in seven
- Obesity rate is higher among Hispanic and African-American kids

Texans cannot be proud when it comes to obesity:

- Three in ten adults in Texas are obese - a bad example for kids
- Obesity rate for our low-income, pre-school kids is one in five

When is a kid obese?

A kid is **overweight** when his/her BMI is between 85th and 95th percentile. A kid is **obese** when it's above 95th percentile.

BMI – it's short for Body Mass Index – is a number which your pediatrician or child psychiatrist determines using the growth charts for kids of same age and sex.

And "percentile" is the percent where your kid falls when you line up, by BMI, all nation's kids of his/her age and sex - from lowest BMI (zero percentile) to highest (99th).

How can obesity harm your kid?

Higher risk of cardiovascular disease – CVD:

- Two in three obese kids have one CVD risk factor
- Two in five obese kids have two or more CVD risk factors

Obese kids also have higher risk of

- Type 2 diabetes
- Sleep apnea or asthma
- Problems with joints and muscles
- Liver disease, gallstones, heartburn
- Social discrimination
- Poor self-esteem

- and all of these problem are likely to continue into adulthood !

What happens when an obese kids grows up?

Obese children are more likely to become obese adults – more severely obese than their obesity as a kid.

And to harms from childhood obesity an obese adult ads a higher risk of cancer.

Why do kids become obese?

***Too many calories,
too little exercise !***

Calories from:

- Sugar drinks and such – both at home and in school
- Unhealthy food – peddled by smart TV ads
- Limited access to healthy, affordable foods
- Increasing portion sizes

Too little exercise:

- No safe attractive place safely play and sweat it out
- Lack of daily, quality PE or such in many schools
- 4.5 hours/day in front of TV + 3 more in front of other screens
= 7.5 hours total for ages 8-18, and 2 hours total for ages 2-8

What can you do to fight childhood obesity?

The most important thing is family –

First, what parents do - “leading by example”

Second, what parents preach

Specifically, parents should

- Limit all screen times combined to no more than 1 to 2 hours/day
- Ask that school screen time be limited to fall w/in this daily total

- Provide healthy food, and pressure school to do same
- Pressure schools to introduce actively promoted salad bars
- Pressure schools for “only healthy” food and drink vending

- At meals serve water, and pressure school to enforce this too
- Ensure their kids exercise daily, and pressure school to do same
- Have their own kids breastfed and pressure schools to promote it

As consumers and voters, parents should exert pressure that

- Grocery firms open healthy food outlets in their community
- Places for safe active play be available in their community