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## **Parenting & Dealing With Childhood Obesity**

**By Michele Oberton**

One of the leading problems effecting today's youth is that of childhood obesity. One of the most important parenting tips that could ultimately save a child's life is to deal with the problem early and yet with great sensitivity. The truth is that dealing with this delicate parenting issue early may help to save a child from dealing with obesity and other related illnesses in later life.

Over the years, the presence of obesity in children has dramatically increased. Many experts attribute the surge to over exposure to video games, television and computers. Others suspect that the increasing problem stems from poor eating habits and still others believe it may be a little bit of both.

Among other problems, obese children are at higher risk for developing diabetes and heart related illnesses. Health professionals are commonly worried that children who battle with weight early in life may face obesity later in adulthood, which could have a very negative impact on their health.

A child who is overweight or has recently been diagnosed with obesity, should not be singled out from the family as being the only one needing to make a change in their lifestyle. This is one of the most important parenting techniques to use when dealing with childhood obesity and is also one that will greatly impact a child's self-esteem. If parenting isn't done properly in this situation, the child may forever feel inferior or begin to identify themselves by how much they weigh, which is an unhealthy possibility. It is important that the entire family join together and participate in healthier meals, less television time and increased levels of activity, including walking.

Among the best parenting remedies used to combat obesity is preparing more fruits, vegetables and less foods that are high in fat. Positive parenting techniques will involve having healthy snacks available for your family and encouraging them over junk foods. Additionally, set a schedule for the family to take a brisk walk or spend some time doing some type of physical activity, including a game of basketball, softball, volleyball, etc. Anything that will get your child up and moving instead of spending all of his/her time in front of the television or video game will be to their benefit and will lend to the positive impact of good parenting. And finally, be vocal during your child's medical visits. This includes asking the doctor questions about any concerns that you may have, as well as taking his/her advice when it comes to the health of your child.

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**“Who’s Responsibility Is It?”**

**By Mary Mason-Shields**

Being an employee of a rural school system, I see problems with childhood obesity daily. This is such an unrealistic observation and yet one that has stirred much research and concern.

Does the school system have an obligation to curb childhood obesity? Can the school system make a successful change in childhood obesity? This writer thinks the obligation for childhood obesity should be on the home with real enforcement from the school system.

A child spends more time in the home than in school. If a child is not an active participant in a plan to squelch childhood obesity at home, it is very difficult for the school system to implement a plan of attack.

The school system's approach to fighting childhood obesity could begin with the food served to children in the school's cafeteria. The school system also needs to remove any temptation from children by removing unhealthy snacks from vending machines.

Rather than sugar-sweetened drinks in the vending machines, the school system could offer milk, water and/or natural fruit juices. Instead of a vending machine full of potato chips, candies and cookies, they could offer whole-grain granola bars, apples, and other healthy snacks.

The school system can also play a definitive force in childhood obesity by promoting more physical activity for children. Sure, children are required to take physical education in school but physical activity can move beyond just one class of physical education. Teachers could use ten minutes of each of a child's class time to engage in some type of physical activity, i.e., calisthenics before coursework begins.

Child obesity is a growing problem and it must be addressed as soon as the obesity is detected. I am an avid promoter of fasting but statistics show fasting is not conducive for children.

Although fasting is not good for children, it is a jump-start for the parents who are trying to get motivated to change the family's lifestyle for the sake of the obese child. I am not a proponent of long-term fasting but I am a promoter of a five-day fast.

Parents who try to disguise or deny there is a problem within their family of child obesity should take a hard and closer look at the statistics researchers have done. To declare heredity as an excuse for obesity will not erase the problem.

Take an active part in your child's lifestyle. Look at his/her habits. Look at his/her daily routine. Does your child get enough (if any) physical activity at home? Do you enforce rules governing a healthy lifestyle? Do you insist that your child eat fruits and vegetables? Do you insist that your child drinks water? If your answer to these questions is `no', then you have a severe problem of aiding and abetting child obesity.

Take control now before it is too late. No child deserves to become a statistic. Keep your child off of the statistical roll today. Researchers indicate that it is far less difficult to prevent child obesity than it is

to treat it. Why not take notice now to see if your child is an avid candidate for child obesity?

Statistical data obtained from Mayo Clinic research and the ERIC database.

Mary Mason-Shields is an avid proponent of health and wellness for children and adults.&nbsp; She is an independent distributor for a major health and wellness company.&nbsp;  
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