

Issue Overview

EXCESS WEIGHT & KIDS' HEALTH

Our kids could be the first generation to have **shorter lives** than their parents. This can be traced to the health risks that come from gaining too much weight.

An overweight child has a **70% chance of being an overweight adult.** The odds go up to 80% if a parent is overweight.

Overweight kids are at risk for major health problems. **Heart disease, high blood pressure, and type 2 diabetes** are a few of the main ones. They face even more health risks as overweight adults.

Overweight children face teasing from their peers. They also are **less likely to do well in school.**



Depression and low self-image are common in overweight kids.

Poor Nutrition & Inactivity are Creating a Growing Problem

- There are twice as many obese children as there were 20 years ago. There are three times as many obese teens.
- Medical conditions once considered "adult diseases" are increasingly being diagnosed in children.
- Some groups are at more risk for obesity. Rates are higher in Blacks, Latinos, and Native Americans.
- Among a sample of Iowa 3rd–5th graders, 37.5% are at-risk for overweight or are overweight.



4%

1963–65,
1966–70



4%

1971–74



7%

1976–80



11%

1988–94



16%

1999–2002

HISTORY OF OBESITY RATES FOR CHILDREN AGES 6 – 11

DEFINITIONS

Overweight: A child who weighs more than 85 out of 100 kids of the same height, age, and sex.

Obese: A child who weighs more than 95 out of 100 kids of the same height, age, and sex.

Why are our kids out of balance?



Breast-fed babies can regulate the amount they eat.



Mom's food and exercise habits in pregnancy can affect a child's future weight.



From infancy, kids develop the food and activity habits they see at home.



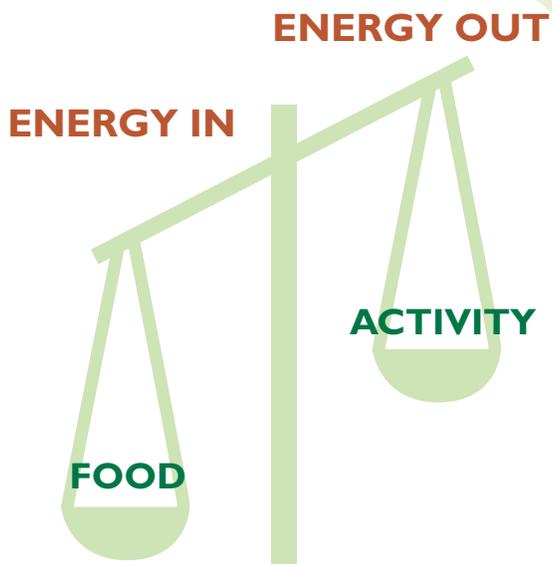
Young children tend to choose the right amount of food when they serve themselves.



Kids should get 1/2 hour of activity each day — 1 in 4 gets none.

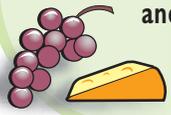


Large portions can cause kids to eat too much.



The average child spends 6 1/2 hours a day watching TV and playing computer games.

Nearly 3/4 of the households in the US have at least 3 TV sets.



Kids today eat fewer fruits, vegetables, and dairy foods. They eat more fast food, snacks, and sodas.



Cities often lack safe parks and other places for kids to play.



Teens drink twice as much soda as milk. The opposite was true 25 years ago.



Families eat fewer meals together.



Many K-12 schools have cut down PE programs. Most high school kids choose not to take PE at all.



Kids and adults spend more time in cars than 30 years ago. Only about 1 in 7 kids bike or walk to school.

Energy balance is needed to maintain a healthy weight.

One small chocolate chip cookie (50 calories) is equivalent to walking briskly for 10 minutes.

How can we help our kids get in balance?

Children & Families

- *Infants and toddlers* • *School-age children* • *Teens*
- *Parents and other family members* • *Other caregivers*

- Foster healthy food and activity habits from birth.
- Be role models for healthy choices.
- Provide healthy food at home.
- Promote active forms of play.
- Reduce inactive TV time.

Community Programs & Leaders

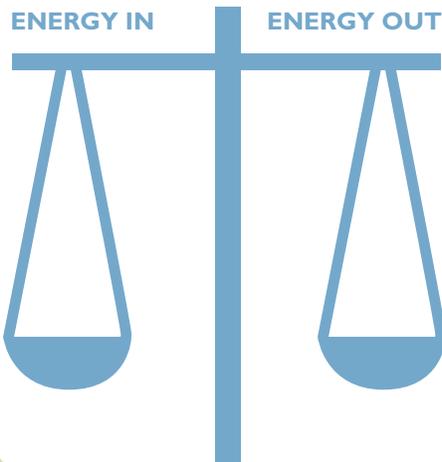
- *City planners* • *Transportation planners*
- *Social and civic groups* • *Youth groups*
- *Churches and religious groups*

- Build parks, bike paths, and other options for active play.
- Make access to stores with fresh food easier.
- Serve healthy food and include physical activity at community events.

Educators & Schools

- *Teachers* • *School boards*
- *Administrators* • *Educator groups*

- Teach kids the benefits of healthy food and physical activity.
- Offer healthy foods at school.
- Provide times for active play.
- Include PE in school programs.



Health Care Community

- *Doctors, nurses*
- *Other health care providers*
- *Hospitals* • *Insurers*
- *Government health agencies*
- *Other health organizations*

- Provide age-appropriate information and practical suggestions to parents.
- Advocate for early identification and prevention of weight-related health issues.
- Promote good nutrition and physical exercise.

Legislators & Policymakers

- *Local government* • *Regional government*
- *State government* • *Federal government*

- Make policies that support healthy choices, such as food labeling.
- Create incentives for health promoting, foods or exercise-related products.
- Promote regional, state, and federal programs that support local efforts to improve health habits.

Corporations & Private Sector

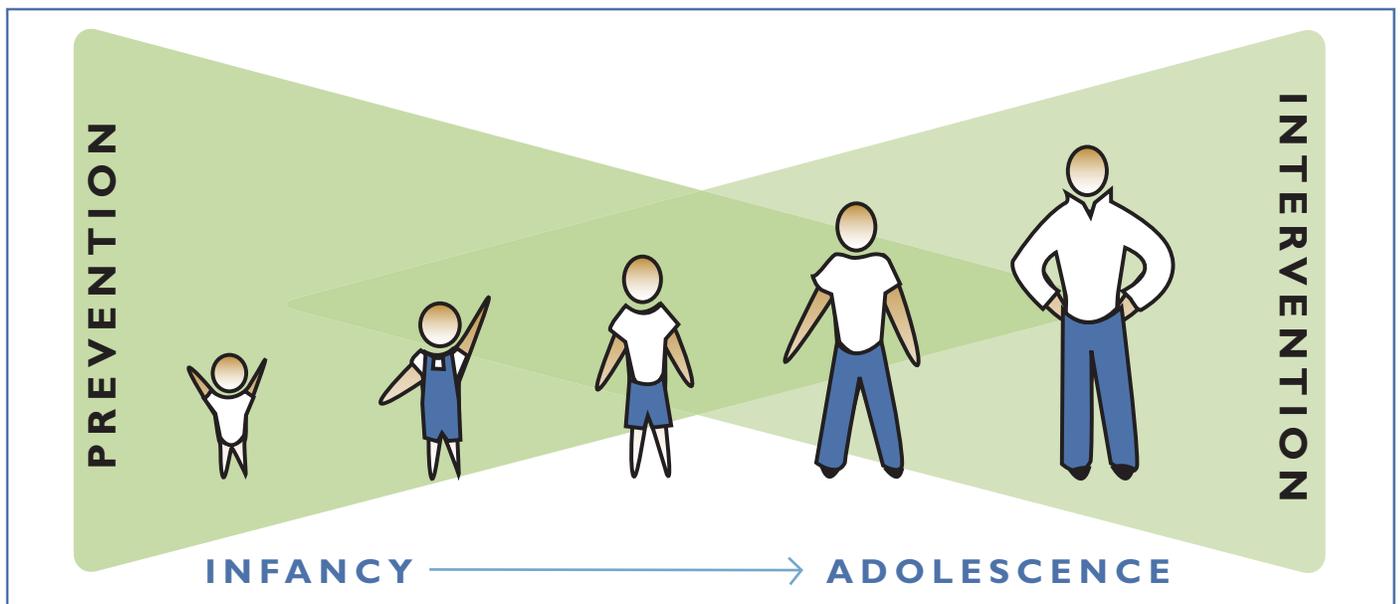
- *Employee benefit departments*
- *Company wellness programs* • *Charitable foundations*
- *Restaurants and food industry* • *Sports and fitness companies*
- *Transportation companies* • *Grocery stores and food suppliers*

- Provide exercise opportunities and healthy food choices in work places.
- Give new mothers times and places to breast-feed at work.
- Market products that support healthy choices.
- Encourage a healthy lifestyle in advertising aimed at kids and families.

There are Challenges to Change

The same challenges face all groups when making changes. These factors are:

- **Time.** Making changes takes time and effort.
- **Money.** Healthy foods cost more. Activity programs and better city planning take more funds.
- **Knowledge.** All groups need to know the dangers of excess weight. They also need to know their role in its causes and how they can help to change it.
- **Resources.** People and funds are needed for new programs. These resources may be tied up in other areas.
- **Environment.** Changing values, ideas, and routines can be hard. This can get in the way of adopting healthier habits. Kids need their environment to support healthy changes.



Prevention Comes First

Prevention is the number one goal. It has to start with the youngest children. Kids need to learn good habits when very young. This can prevent excess weight down the road. Once unhealthy habits are in place, they are tough to change. Losing weight is the hardest of all. It is a long term process that many people struggle with all their lives. The effectiveness of prevention is far greater than that of intervention.

Shaping America's Youth would like to thank the following corporate partners:



©2006 Shaping America's Youth
Created by Academic Network, LLC
Designed by The Grove Consultants International