

Are We Killing Our Children?

by
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You are what you eat. The “super-size” portions and high sugar consumption of the American diet have super-sized our children and put them at risk for a life time of disease. In 1998, the United States Surgeon General declared childhood obesity an American epidemic. The percentage of children and adolescents who are overweight and obese is now higher than ever before. America is larded with high-fat, calorie-dense junk food. Poor dietary habits and inactivity are reported to contribute to the increase of obesity in youth.

Obesity increases one's risk of developing conditions such as high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, gallbladder disease, cancer of the breast, prostate and colon, diabetes (type 2) which puts kids at risk for blindness, nerve damage, and kidney failure. Is this what we wish for our children?

Latest Statistics

- 13% of American children ages 6-11 are overweight – increasing 1% per year
- 15% of teenagers are overweight
- Overweight children statistics have doubled over the last 20 years
- Overweight children are 20-30% heavier than they were 10 years ago
- An obese adolescent has twice the risk of his/her peers of dying prematurely.
- 5% of our children now have high blood pressure
- Childhood Type II diabetes has tripled in the last five years
- Fifty million American children have abnormally high cholesterol levels
- 70% of children by age 12 have evidence of fatty deposits in their arteries.
- 80% of children still exceed the recommended levels of fat consumption per day

In the past several decades, we have created unbalanced nutritional lifestyles, sedentary lifestyles and poor quality foods for our children. There has been a marked increase in refined carbohydrates, sodas, fruit juice, hidden sugar, fat free products and breakfast cereals that contain more sugar than candy bars.

How can parents protect their child from this growing epidemic? The first thing parents must do is educate their children about exercise and nutrition and water. Teach them that eating high fat, starchy carbohydrates, high sugar foods will pack on the pounds. Let them know that a Value Meal from Burger King has more than half the calories that should be consumed in one day. Let them know if they “King-size” the same meal, it carries more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the daily recommended calories! Let them know that this isn't a healthy way to eat. Let them know that it's good to limit consumption of food and “eating everything on your plate” isn't a health philosophy. Teach them to drink only water, give sweets sparingly and provide more opportunities for physical activities. Ask your school to remove sodas and fast foods from their facilities, as well as make your home a “junk food-free zone”.

