

A Problem That's Getting Bigger

- The percentage of overweight and obese children and adolescents has nearly *tripled* in just the past twenty years
- Roughly one in three American children and adolescents are now overweight or obese
- Minority children, and children from poor households, are even more likely to be overweight or obese
- This generation of children is facing the likelihood of being the first in modern history to live shorter life spans than their parents
- This epidemic of childhood obesity is nothing less than a national tragedy in slow motion
- This epidemic is *the* major public health crisis facing our society in the 21st century
- Almost one in three American children are at least overweight
- Overweight is defined as >85th percentile for Body Mass Index (BMI) for age; obese is defined as >95th percentile BMI
- 60% of children whose BMI is >95th percentile already have *at least one* of these risk factors for cardiovascular disease: increased LDL cholesterol, increased insulin, increased triglycerides, decreased HDL cholesterol, or high blood pressure
- 20-40% of all new cases of type 2 diabetes now diagnosed under age 21

What Causes Overweight?

Simplest Explanations:

- Energy intake exceeds energy expenditure
- Genes *plus* environment ("**Genes load the gun, environment pulls the trigger**")
- *Rarely* due to true medical cause

More Complex Explanations:

- Obesity is more common in urban areas, among single children, in children of older or single parents, and if parent(s) obese (25-50% risk if one parent, 75% if both)
- Shifts in food practices: food preparation by children, enormous food variety in stores (double from 20 years ago), portion size inflation, 50% of meals either fast food or eaten at restaurants, sale of unhealthy foods and beverages at schools, meteoric rise in soda consumption ("liquid candy")
- Shifts in activity to inactivity: less physical education in schools, over-reliance on automobiles, more elevators and escalators, poorly planned urban sprawl with fewer safe places for physical activity
- The average child now spends more time indoors, stationary, in front of some type of screen, than any other activity besides sleeping. Parents are not so much letting their children watch television, as asking television to watch their children.

Did You Know?

Being overweight or obese as a child increases the child's lifetime risk of:

- High blood pressure
- Type 2 diabetes (30-50% lifetime risk!)
- Certain cancers

- Elevated cholesterol
- Coronary artery disease
- Heart attacks
- Strokes
- Liver & Gallbladder disease
- Early-onset puberty
- Depression
- Cigarette addiction
- Sleep apnea
- Iron, Vitamin & Mineral deficiencies
- Orthopedic conditions
- Adult Obesity