



CHILDHOOD OBESITY: NATIONAL

Body Mass Index (BMI) measures a person's body fat based on their weight and height. If BMI exceeds 30, a person is considered obese. For children, the measure also takes into account variation in body fat between girls and boys and between ages. These are standard measures in the U.S. used by doctors and national health organizations like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

WHO IS AT RISK?

- Today, nearly 25 million or 1/3 of children in the U.S. are overweight or obese.
- The prevalence of obesity among children aged 6 to 11 more than doubled in the past 20 years, from 6.5% in 1980 to 17% in 2006. The rate among adolescents aged 12 to 19 more than tripled, from 5% to 17.6%.¹
- Studies suggest that nearly three out of every four overweight teenagers may become overweight adults.²
- One in three American children born after 2000 is expected to develop type 2 diabetes. For children of African-American or Hispanic descent, the odds are one in two. The single greatest risk factor for type 2 diabetes in children is excess weight.

WHAT ARE SOME HEALTH CONSEQUENCES?

- Childhood obesity is associated with a higher risk of premature death and disability in adulthood.
- If childhood obesity continues to increase at its current pace, the current generation of children could become the first in American history to live shorter lives than their parents.³
- Obesity contributes to the prevalence of the following diseases, which used to be diseases of old age, but are beginning to occur more among younger people: heart disease and strokes, type 2 diabetes, musculoskeletal disorders (especially osteoarthritis), and some cancers (endometrial, breast, and colon).⁴

WHAT ARE SOME SOCIETAL CONSEQUENCES?

- Children treated for obesity are roughly three times more expensive for the health-care system than children of normal weight.
- Studies have shown that teens with weight problems tend to have much lower self-esteem than their peers. Depression, anxiety, and obsessive-compulsive disorder can also occur more frequently.⁵

¹ National Health & Nutrition Examination Survey

² Freedman DS, et al. Relationship of childhood obesity to coronary heart disease risk factors in adulthood: the Bogalusa Study. *Pediatrics* 2001;108(3):712-718.

³ Clinton Foundation

⁴ National Institutes for Health, "Clinical Guidelines of the Identification, Evaluation, and Treatment of Overweight and Obesity in Adults"

⁵ The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry