Parenting in a Changing World: Thinking About Parents and Childhood Obesity Prevention

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Prevalence of Obesity Among U.S. Children 1963-2010

The graph shows the prevalence of obesity among U.S. children from 1963 to 2010, categorized by age groups: 2-5 years, 6-11 years, and 12-19 years. The data indicates a rising trend in obesity prevalence over the years for all age groups, with the 6-11 years group showing the most significant increase.
Childhood Obesity - Risk Starts Early

1 of 3 Children Are Obese or Overweight Before Their 5th Birthday

1 of 7 Low Income Preschool Children are Obese

American Indian and Alaska Native (20.7%) and Hispanic (17.9%) children have the highest rate among preschool children

2009-2011 County Obesity Prevalence Among Low Income Children Aged 2 to 4 Years
What Has Changed?

Rapid Increase in Immigrant Families

In 17 states, over 28% of immigrant children live below the poverty line.
Workforce and Early Care

- In 1975 2 out of 5 Women with Children Under the Age of 6 Held a Paid Job
- In 2010, the Number of Women Going Back to Work Before Their Children Reached Their First Birthday Was 56.5%
- The percent of children enrolled in early care and education programs has remained relatively stable since 1995 (56%). However, the number of poor children receiving early care in relative homes or home providers has increased significantly.
Nutrition Transition

[Image: Comparison between old and new food environments, with the text "HOW AMERICA EATS"]
As A Nation We Eat More

- Average caloric intake increased 24.5% or about 530 calories between 1970 and 2000.

- Annual consumption of cheese increased 287% between 1950-2000. Most cheese consumption is processed cheese used in prepared foods.

- Average use of added fats increased 67% between 1950 and 2000.

- American consumption of sweeteners increased 39% between 1950 and 2000.

- In 2000, the average American consumed 152 pounds of caloric sweetener.
**Changes in Physical Environment**

**Walking & Biking to School**

- In 1969, 48% of children 5 to 14 usually walked or bicycled to school.
- In 2009, 13% of children 5 to 14 years of age usually walked or bicycled to school.
- In 1969, 41% of children in K-8 lived within one mile of school—89% of those walked or biked to school.
- In 2009, 31% of children in grades K-8 lived within one mile of school—35% walked or biked to school.
What do we expect of parents?

- Follow Dietary Guidelines
- Practice Responsive Feeding
- Limit Screen Time
- Adequate Sleep
- Adequate Physical Activity
What is the Reality?

Vegetable Consumption 2-3 year olds

- 30% do not consume any vegetables in a given day
- Fewer than 15% consume dark green leafy vegetables
- French Fries most commonly consumed vegetable

Fox et al, (2010)
Screen Time

- 46% of families report having a television in the area where they eat.

- 67% of children between 4 and 11 years watch more than 2 hours of television or videos per day.

- Each additional hour of television viewing increases prevalence of childhood obesity by 2%.
Physical Activity

Preschool Children

- 60% of outdoor time spent in sedentary activities
- 3.4-11.0% in moderate to vigorous physical activity

4-11 year olds

- 31% engage in low active play
Sleep

- Preschool age children should get about 10-12 hours of sleep per night
- 68.9% of preschool aged children had a TV in their bedroom
- Bedroom TV is associated with obesity in school-age children
- Children with TV in bedrooms watch more TV and sleep less
Must we blame parents?

Family Life is Complex

Embedded in A Food and Built Environment

Simple Portrayals Disregard Hard Work of Parenting
Mealtime Routines as an Example
Mealtime FAQ’s

- Most shared family mealtimes last between 18-20 minutes.

- 63% of family members eat dinner together “frequently” or “always”.

- Families with children under 18 eat dinner together “frequently” or “always” 77% of the time.

- 86% of parents agreed that dinnertime was the best time for family members to get together and talk.
# Meta-analysis

## Study Characteristics
- 17 studies
- 182,836 children
- Children between 2.8-17.3 years
- Families share 3 or more meals per week

## Nutritional Health Outcomes
- Reduces the odds for overweight by 12%
- Reduces the odds for eating unhealthy foods by 20%
- Reduces the odds for eating disorders by 35%
- Increases the odds for eating healthy foods by 24%

ABC’s Family Mealtime

Activities
Talking on Cell Phone
Getting Up From Table

Behavior Control
Manners
Behavior Management

Communication
How was your day?
Can we get a new puppy?

Time Spent At Meal

![Graph showing time spent at meal]

Healthy Weight
Unhealthy Weight > 85th %

Report of Mealtime Quality

Scheduling  | Importance  | Special Meaning
Healthy Weight | p < .05 | Healthy Weight | p < .02 | Healthy Weight | p < .05
Unhealthy Weight >85th % | | Unhealthy Weight >85th % | | Unhealthy Weight >85th % |
Other Family Climate Indicators

Responsive Feeding Patterns

Parenting Stress

Family Chaos
Primary Barriers to Sharing Meals in Families With Preschool-Age Children

**Problematic Behavior**
- Sibling Fights
- Picky Eating
- Child Tantrums

**Scheduling Difficulties**
- Parent Work

**Support From Partner**

Primary Challenges- Parents of 8-10 Year Olds

- Planning
- Scrambling for Meal Prep
- Picky Eaters
- Healthy Meal Ideas
- Conflict
- Partner away
- Separate Meals

Fulkerson et al., 2008
What Do Parent’s Do?

46% of families interviewed in CDC report stated they had a television where they ate.

Parents of young children report using television during mealtimes as a way to avoid conflict.
Why is This A Problem?

- Monitoring Food Choice
- Prevents Communication
- Food Advertising
Food Marketing

Total amount spent on food marketing to children is about $10 billion a year.

Fast food outlets spend over $3 billion annually on television advertising aimed at children.

About 80% of foods advertised to children are for fast foods and sweets.

It would require 10 hours of children’s television viewing to see one ad of “Go” foods.
Pester Power

Young children have become a powerful force in parents decision making

It is time to reclaim time, budgets, and the family table
Parents Are Concerned About Media Effects

- Encourages children to pester parents
- Increases food preferences
- Promotes unhealthy foods
- Encourages snacking between meals

Makes parents job harder

Negative Influence of Different Institutions on Healthy Eating

Access is Important

- African American Neighborhoods
- White Neighborhoods
Clear the PATH for Parents

PLANNING

ACCESS

TOOLS

HARD FACTS
Reaching Out to Parents

- Child Care
- Farmers Markets
- PSA's
- Abriendo Caminos

Institutions
Public Engagement
Policy and Professional Societies
Whole Family Intervention and Prevention
Mealtime PSA’s
Funding Partners

- USDA
- National Cancer Institute
- University of Illinois Health and Wellness Initiative
- Christopher Family Foundation Food and Family Program
- The Pampered Chef, Ltd.
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Thank You!