

## Overweight Children



# focus: A large-scale problem

For medical professionals

Volume 3

Overweight and obesity have reached epidemic proportions within the United States. But perhaps even more alarming is that the crisis is not limited to adults. According to the most recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, **16%** of US children ages 6-19 are overweight. That's triple the number in 1980.<sup>1</sup>

As a healthcare professional, you may frequently encounter the problem directly with your patients.

**The challenge is helping parents and children understand the importance of effectively dealing with it.**

## Restricting foods may do the opposite

If a child is overweight, restricting intake of certain foods may seem like an ideal way to correct the “problem” for many parents. Unfortunately, this can have the opposite effect of what parents intended. An article in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* indicates that restricting palatable foods can draw a child’s attention to the food even more.<sup>2</sup>

Results of the research suggest that limiting intake of select foods may lead to an increased liking for and consumption of the food. Much like the temptation of the “forbidden fruit,” parents should be aware of this potential response when trying to promote healthier eating habits in their children.<sup>2</sup>

To view the article, visit [www.ajcn.org/cgi/content/full/69/6/1264](http://www.ajcn.org/cgi/content/full/69/6/1264)

## Heavy-duty statistics

**16%**

of US children and adolescents ages 6-19 are overweight<sup>1</sup>

**70%**

Chance an overweight adolescent will become an overweight or obese adult<sup>3</sup>

**43%**

of adolescents watch more than 2 hours of television each day<sup>3</sup>

**10 lbs**

Approximate weight gain per year (beyond normal growth), if a child eats 100 more food calories a day than they burn<sup>4</sup>

For additional information, visit [www.SplendaProfessional.com](http://www.SplendaProfessional.com)

## Advice for parents

You may know that the goal for most overweight children and adolescents is to reduce the rate of weight gain while allowing for normal linear growth and development. However, many parents don't necessarily understand what that means. They often misinterpret it and think their child needs to go on a weight-reducing diet. And while monitoring their child's caloric intake and portion sizes is necessary, placing their child on a weight-reducing diet without an HCP's direction isn't.

Here are a few tips to help parents help their kids—without making any one food completely off-limits.

### Help kids stay active—

Remind parents that being physically active is an effective way to help kids reduce excessive weight gain and allow their bodies to “catch up” if they are overweight.

### Remove calorie-rich temptations—

Kids don't have to avoid favorite, indulgent foods completely. Limiting intake of high-calorie treats to once in a while (instead of completely) and limiting portion sizes will allow kids to enjoy the foods they like.

### Spend time in the kitchen with kids—

Parents can teach kids a lot about healthier eating when cooking and baking with them. Substitute a no-calorie sweetener in place of sugar to help reduce a child's caloric intake.



## Where else can parents turn?

Parents can visit [aom.americaonthemove.org](http://aom.americaonthemove.org), where they'll find small, easy-to-make changes that can have a positive impact on a child's weight and health. These tips are proven to make a difference.

To figure out their child's body mass index, parents can visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov), type in “BMI,” and choose the child and teen BMI calculator.

Parents can go to [www.actionforhealthykids.org](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org) for more information about how overweight is being addressed in schools. Action for Healthy Kids operates in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

At [www.splenda.com](http://www.splenda.com), parents can find award-winning Kid's Pleasers recipes that substitute sugar with the no-calorie sweetener when cooking and baking. They're kid, parent, and chef approved.



SPLENDA® Brand Sweetener can be used safely by the whole family, including children, women who are pregnant or nursing, and people with diabetes. For data on the science and safety of sucralose, visit [www.SplendaProfessional.com](http://www.SplendaProfessional.com).

**References:** 1. Obesity still a major problem, new data show. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site. <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/04facts/obesity.htm>. Published October 6, 2004. Updated October 6, 2006. Accessed March 19, 2008. 2. Fisher JO, Birch LL. Restricting access to palatable foods affects children's behavioral response, food selection, and intake. *Am J Clin Nutr*. 1999;69:1264-1272. 3. The surgeon general's call to action to prevent and decrease overweight and obesity. United States Department of Health and Human Services Web site. <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov>. Updated January 11, 2007. Accessed March 12, 2008. 4. US Department of Health and Human Services, US Department of Agriculture. Finding your way to a healthier you: based on the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. <http://www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines>. Accessed March 12, 2008.

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