

HEALTHY WEIGHT FOR YOUNG CHILDREN (Obesity & Overweight in Young Children)

Objectives

- Participants will understand the problems associated with overweight and obesity in children.
- Participants will support positive eating habits in children.
- Participants will help children learn about food and eating healthfully.

Discuss “Background Situation” and “Cause for Concern” as a way of explaining why weight of young children has become such a big issue in America.

Distribute handouts and involve participants in discussion of information in the handout.

Background Situation

Overweight and Obesity have reached epidemic proportions in the United States. According to former Surgeon General David Satcher, overweight and obesity may soon cause as much preventable disease and death as cigarette smoking.

In 1999, an estimated 61 percent of U.S. adults and about 13 percent of children and 14 percent adolescents were overweight. Today there are nearly twice as many overweight children and almost three times as many overweight adolescents as there were in 1980. We are already seeing tragic results from these trends. Approximately 300,000 deaths a year in this country are associated with overweight and obesity.

In children and adolescents, **overweight** is defined as Body Mass Index above the 9th percentile. That means that for every 100 children of the same sex and age, 95 will have BMIs below those whose BMI falls above the 95th percentile line. Children whose BMIs fall between the 85th and 95th percentile are considered **at risk for overweight** and those whose BMIs fall below the 5th percentile are considered **underweight**. Children whose BMIs fall between the 5th and 85th percentiles are considered **normal** weight for height.

Cause for Concern

Overweight in children has potential profound effects on their current health and long term health. Overweight children are more than two times likely to have high levels of cholesterol. High blood pressure and Type 2 diabetes are more frequent in overweight children.

One of the biggest concerns is that obese children are more likely to become obese adults, with all of the health, social and psychological ramifications. The risk is higher for those who were obese at older ages, such as in adolescence. If parents are obese the risk for children becoming obese adults is much greater.

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