

by NLLIC Staff (Revised 2008)

Obesity is a new national epidemic. According to a recent prediction by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), over 40 percent of the American population will be considered obese by 2010. Americans live in a stress-filled environment with little time to eat properly, exercise or take care of themselves.

Since 1980, obesity rates have more than doubled among children and more than tripled among adolescents. Figures for 2004 show over twelve and a half million overweight children, at these prevalence rates:

- 13.9% for children 2 through 5
- 18.8% for children 6 through 11
- 17.4% for adolescents 12 through 19 ¹

Children living with limb loss are not excluded from this frightening statistic. Amputees have even more at stake in staying physically active. Without proper exercise, obese children are at greater risk in developing life-threatening secondary conditions.

What are secondary conditions?

A secondary condition is broadly defined as any medical, social, emotional, mental, family or community problem that a person with a primary disabling condition is likely to experience. The risk of developing diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol and cancer is higher for people who are overweight or obese. According to the CDC, nearly 24 million Americans have diabetes, mostly the type-2 diabetes linked with obesity. An additional 57 million have pre-diabetes (blood glucose levels that are higher than normal), which is a strong risk factor for developing diabetes later in life.²

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Obesity is easier to prevent than to treat, but prevention can be based on proper education and behavior changes. Changing your child's behavior doesn't have to be difficult in order to be effective in preventing obesity and secondary conditions. Changing your child's diet plan and incorporating more physical activity are keys to preventing obesity and its associated secondary conditions.

Physical Activity

Always consult a physician before beginning any exercise program. Even moderate physical activity, like a short stroll around the neighborhood, has significant health benefits. You should select activities that you and your child will enjoy.

National Limb Loss Information Center, a program of the Amputee Coalition of America

Improving Your Diet

Set an example for your child with proper diet choices. Ensure that your child's diet meets appropriate nutritional standards. People with diets that are high in fat, calories and sugar are linked to Type 2 diabetes.

Online Resources

American Obesity Association

www.obesity.org

American Diabetes Association (ADA)

www.diabetes.org

VERB: It's what you do. (National CDC and NIH campaign to increase physical activity in children)

www.verbnow.com

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service: Food Pyramid for Children

www.mypyramid.gov/kids

National Center on Physical Activity and Disability

www.ncpad.org

Additional Resources

Institute of Medicine of the National Academies. Preventing Childhood Obesity: Health in the Balance. Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press, 2005.

Okie, Susan, M.D. Fed Up! Winning the War Against Childhood Obesity. Foreword by T. Berry Brazelton, M.D. Washington, D.C.: Joseph Henry Press, 2005.

1. Obesity and Overweight: Childhood Overweight: Overweight Prevalence. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. <http://cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/obesity/childhood/prevalence.htm>
2. CDC Press Release - June 24, 2008. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. <http://www.cdc.gov/media/pressrel/2008/r080624.htm>

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