

# A Speech on Obesity in Children

Posted on December 17, 2024

## Childhood Obesity as a Growing Public Health Crisis

Good afternoon. My name is Brianna Robertson, and I am here to deliver a speech on “Obesity in Children”. To begin with, obesity has become a rising concern for the young generation of today. Even young children are not exempted from this and its potential consequences, as the Latest National Survey of Children’s Health of 2019-20 has stated that obesity is prevalent in about 16.2% of young children and youth in the United States (Initiative).

This concern does not stop here at 16% only as the latest data from the CDC has reported that nearly 15 million children in the United States have obesity. Due to limited access to healthy food, obesity prevalence in rural and underserved areas of the United States of America is so high that an estimated \$14 billion is spent on children with obesity each year (Smith and Smith).

Before stating further about this topic, I want to ask my honorable audience this question if you had the power to save many children’s lives, would you take the initiative to save and protect children? Would you take steps to protect the children of your community from the havoc of obesity, because it is becoming a serious problem of public health in society.

## Community Responsibility and the Need for Early Prevention

Know that obesity is never a good thing for anyone, but it is worst for the vulnerable population of children. So, as a responsible citizen, you have to take the initiatives to fight it for the sake of your children’s future and the first step to combat this disorder starts from our very home. The reason why children and adults become overweight or obese is because they cannot afford a healthy diet. Children incline towards unhealthy food items at home first and then at their schools because 87% of parents cannot follow food-based dietary guidelines (Smith and Smith).

Moreover, western dietary patterns are chock-full of more sugar and fat that a large number of Western people consume in their daily routines because most people, especially in underserved areas, do not have access to healthy food items. The affordability of fresh and healthy food products is a problem in Western countries because of a number of factors such as food waste, food prices, unemployment rates, income inequality, lower-wage jobs, and environmental issues (Birch). Authorities in this regard need to take initiatives for their people in their respective countries which

include creating more higher-wage jobs, lowering healthy food prices, and expanding social protections for lower-income individuals.

Research conducted at Harvard School of Public Health has reported that the [childhood obesity](#) rate has tripled in the United States over the past three decades: one out of three children is overweight, one out of six children is obese, and struggling with numerous health problems (Taveras et al.). A CDC report has revealed that children with obesity have three times more healthcare expenditures than children with healthy weight because obese children likely to develop complex health problems such as type 2 diabetes, heart problems, and high levels of cholesterol (Fryar et al.). Obesity has negative impacts on the lives of children both in the short and long run. It is a direct cause of psychological and physical ill health because it increases risks of heart-related problems, sleep apnea, type 2 diabetes, high cholesterol, and liver diseases. It also causes psychological problems such as social anxiety as obese children find themselves misfit among the healthy and smart children of their age.

## Diet, Environment, and the Causes of Excess Weight in Children

Are you wondering what causes children to become overweight or obese? You might think that this is because of geographical factors or the eating habits of young adults that children are influenced by. Yes, you are right in this regard.

Well, I would like to argue that obesity in children starts at their home. It is due to the behavior or eating pattern that children pick up from their parents and caregivers which causes children to become overweight or obese. A parent cannot stop his child from eating junk food when all they get at home is a proportion of unhealthy food products. He also cannot prevent his child from getting obese by teaching the child about healthy eating habits and encouraging him to stay physically active while parents do not bother to follow their own teachings. The way obesity starts from home with irregular eating habits, fighting obesity also starts from home with making a habit of consuming a healthy diet and exercising regularly in routine patterns to help your child combat obesity at its earliest stage. Thus, home and family are the important targets that can trigger the disorder as well as fight it.

Your child eats what you eat in the realm of your home but now let's see the other side of the story. How often do you find your child sitting in front of the television, on his computer table, or sitting on the couch in your lounge while your mobile is in his hands all day and night? You and your child are not alone in living this way. This has now become a normal lifestyle for families around the world. Children eat, sit on the sofa, play mobile games, and go to sleep. They do not bother themselves going for a morning or evening walk because that is how they see their parents at home, getting less physical exercise. So, they follow in their parent's footsteps and start leading more sedentary lives. Most families have stopped making meals at home anymore because they have to go with the flow and eat at a fancy restaurant. People who cannot afford to eat in hotels or restaurants still prefer

munching junk food because it is relatively less expensive than healthy dietary products. Many people have even substituted soft drinks, high-fat, junk food, and high-sugar food for their regular well-balanced meals. The most troubling fact is that when adults adopt unhealthy eating habits, they are more likely to pass their lifestyle and inactivity along to their children in the family which leads to a dramatic increase in obesity in vulnerable children.

## Social Media, Food Marketing, and Children's Preferences

Social media has further worsened this situation in almost every part of the globe as its use has the highest impact on children influencing their preferences. While they watch the type of food-related content on their screens, they involuntarily consume that dietary preferences and consumption habits without considering the risks related to such dietary products that lead to obesity. Children excessively involved in screen media curtail the highest risk of being overweight and obese due to their physical inactivity and poor diet. Hence, social media is the most significant contributor to ill health in children leading them to a ditch of countless life-threatening diseases which include obstructive sleep disorders, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, certain types of cancers and most importantly anxiety and depression due to unhealthy lifestyle (Robinson et al.).

The story of unhealthy lifestyle moves on as in every child's life, elementary school is an important and essential part where a child witnesses the most significant stages of his/her life. We all know that after home, elementary school is the place where most of the child's learning takes place. During this stage, whatever they see at home and school, such as eating junk food, they automatically think this is the right thing to eat, and as a result, they have a good vision of having junk food in their daily routine. Subsequently, children think of it as not harmful to their health. They eat junk food with no limitations as most elementary schools have substituted eggs, fruits, and vegetables with junk food like burgers, soft drinks, etc., which also gets worsens when their school does not offer enough time for physical activity (Hills et al.).

## Chronic Disease and the Long-Term Consequences of Childhood Obesity

The consequences do not stop here at just children becoming obese as they get many sorts of health problems, including heart diseases, cholesterol, osteoarthritis, diabetes, and stroke at an early age. These illnesses continue to become more threatening to a child's life as immediate fixes through exercise and healthy eating after getting obese and a victim to these diseases do not play their part anymore. It is because of the fact that once fat cells are developed in the body, they cannot be gotten rid of either by a healthy diet or by increased physical activity even if observed daily. Sadly, this means that once fat cells are created in children's bodies, they will likely carry the disorder of obesity

into their adulthood which would remain with them during their entire life with all its detrimental impacts on their physical as well as psychological health. Roughly, more than 50,000 children's deaths occur every year around the globe due to unhealthy eating habits (Reilly et al.). Hence, the younger a child becomes overweight, the harder it becomes for the parents to control or change their nutritional habits, which leads to obtaining more and more weight over time.

As a responsible citizen, what would you do to stop the young and vulnerable population of children from being obese and falling victim to serious diseases at an age that they should enjoy at their fullest? I personally think that banning fattening and junk foods at elementary schools the way alcohol is restricted till a certain age can contribute to creating a safer and healthier environment for the children. Rob Finley, an urban gardener, in his TED talk, emphasizes the importance of growing your own food "is like printing your own money" to urge people to plant and consume healthy food that is growing in their own garden (Finley). Building on that, restricting fattening foods at the elementary level will contribute to children's health, and the regulation of healthy food will save your kid from many health problems. Eating junk foods and munching more unhealthy snacks can lead to several diseases in children, due to which they can have the lowest quality of life among children of their age (Daniels). If we achieve this as a responsible community and citizens of the United States, our children will be benefitted in many ways as they will have healthier eating habits so they would be healthy and will have much more energy.

Furthermore, obesity causes Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The disorder, ADHD, is characterized by an inability to stay still and be calm because children have poor impulse control and short attention span (Fliers et al.). Obesity in childhood also leads to depression and poor self-esteem when these kids become adults. Although obesity is not the sole cause leading to ADHD as other factors including diet, environment, and genetics are involved in developing ADHD in children, it is also prevalent in children with obesity compared to the general population of children. It is a risk factor in obese children because of social communication and higher opposition problems. ADHD although includes hyperactivity which should be the cause to control weight, not a trigger to become obese, it does not necessarily mean higher physical activity which leads to the prevalence of overweight in children.

## Prevention, Family Action, and the Protection of Children's Health

Concluding my concern regarding the serious medical condition of obesity in children, preventing childhood obesity at an early age can help more than treating it as prevention can protect your child's health now and in the future. If it happens to your child, make sure your kid sees the doctor for checkups at least twice a year so that the doctor can keep a record of his/her BMI to check whether the child is at risk of becoming obese. I also make a strong plea for assessment of dietary patterns observed at home and schools and also, they should be observed more carefully in children with

ADHD. Parents and schools should pay more attention to physical fitness activities, regular walks, and daily exercise to address the havoc of obesity and the problems that come with it through children's dietary, sleep, and activity patterns.

Now is the time to act, so decide for your children's better future and take a potential initiative. It is now up to parents, adults in the family, and school administration to teach children alternative healthy solutions to an obese lifestyle. For this to achieve, adults must be aware of their own preferences regarding eating habits as well as activity levels and make adjustments accordingly to influence their children's lifestyles. Adults or parents should empower their children while adjusting their own dietary preferences to leave a positive lifelong impact on their children by being the best role model for the generations to come and their optimal health.

Will you do something? I would like you to think about possible solutions to prevent your child and other children as well from the detrimental consequences of obesity. Trust me, today's children and the coming generations would owe you a lot.

Thank you for your time!

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