Childhood Obesity: Who’s to Blame?

How serious has childhood obesity become?
Childhood obesity is a serious health issue our nation is facing. It has more than doubled in the past three decades among children ages 6 to 11 and more than tripled among 12 to 19 year olds.

What factors affect childhood obesity?
- Genetic
- Physiological
- Psychological
- Metabolic
- Environmental

How is marketing a factor in childhood obesity?
Many companies target young children in their marketing tactics. Children have a significant influence on what is bought in a household.
Companies have found that sticking cartoons, movie characters, and athletes on the covers of their products attracts kids. In turn, the child begs their parents to buy the item.
This puts the parent in a compromising situation and makes it difficult for them to tell the child no.

What is being done to combat marketing tactics?
Companies like Kellogg’s and Viacom have been sued for promoting junk food to children.
In response to the recent lawsuits, the companies are taking action by fortifying their “junk foods” with whole grains and adding real fruit.

What is a parent’s role in fighting childhood obesity?
Parents who are actively involved in their child’s life can make sure their child maintains a healthy weight through diet and exercise.
Studies show too much television and computer time is a huge factor in childhood obesity.
Parents should limit the amount of time children can watch TV or play on the computer.
Breastfeeding was also found to contribute to a child’s risk of obesity. If a child was breastfed the risk decreases, while children who were fed formula had a higher risk of obesity.
Food should also only be used for nourishment and not for a reward. When food is used as a reward, it can confuse the child when it is hungry.

Source:
Does the environment contribute to a child's obesity risks?

Yes, the environment can contribute to a child’s obesity risks. Children who live in dangerous neighborhoods, poor school districts, or have a low family income are more susceptible to obesity.

Most children’s activity is limited if they live in a dangerous neighborhood, because of safety issues.

If parents are concerned about their child’s safety, they might not let him/her play in the streets, especially after dark. Therefore, they may result to inside activities which cripple their energy expenditure.

A low family income also limits healthy eating and extracurricular involvement. Healthy foods are not cheap. Consuming fruits and vegetables is more expensive than buying pre-packaged meals laden with hydrogenated oils and Trans fats.

Extracurricular activities cost money and for parents on a tight budget, their children usually cannot participate.

This hinders involvement in school activities. Therefore; children are missing out on enjoying a fun activity while staying physically active.

Socioeconomic and environmental factors also contribute to childhood obesity. However, it is not an excuse for a child to not be physically active or eat foods in moderation, while trying to add in more fruits and vegetables.

There are many factors that contribute to childhood obesity, but in the end it comes back to how involved the parents are and the healthy image they portray.

References


