



Obesity-The Elephant in the Room

It's hard enough to admit that we adult Americans may be a tad overweight. But when it comes to our children, obesity is a downright ugly word. The National Poll on Children's Health, found that many parents of obese children in the United States do not think their children have a weight problem. According to a report in Pediatric Nursing Journal, parents' perceptions of their children's weight problems may not be dependable or accurate. One study found that 79% of mothers failed to identify their children as overweight. This tendency for denial is troublesome, because parents' ability to recognize and accept that their child is overweight is vital if interventions are to be successful.

The CDC estimates nearly one out of every five American children is overweight. (And 2/3 of American adults are overweight). Overweight or obese children and adolescents are at risk for many health problems. Research indicates that obese children have lower self esteem and self confidence than their thinner peers. Many researchers blame sugary snacks like sodas and high-fat, high-carbohydrate diets. They also say kids spend long hours in front of the television and computer, so they're not burning all those extra calories. The reasons for the rise in childhood obesity are complex. The CDC has recommended 24 community strategies to prevent obesity in the United States.

The American Academy of Pediatrics has developed a [web-site](#) dedicated to the prevention of childhood overweight and obesity. There is a great deal that families can do to promote healthy active living and support each other in staying healthy.

Consider the following AAP suggestions:

Eat 5 fruits and vegetables per day	Regularly eat family meals together
Get 1 hour of physical activity a day	Prepare foods at home as a family
Limit screen time to less than 2 hours a day	Limit fast food, take out, and eating out.
Limit consumption of sugar sweetened beverages	Eat a diet rich in calcium & fiber
Eat breakfast daily	Breastfeed exclusively until 6 months
Switch to low-fat dairy products	Maintain breastfeeding after introduction of solid food until 1 year

It's time to recognize the elephant in the room! In the "can do" spirit of America, let's admit the problem and tackle it head-on!

