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CHILDHOOD OBESITY BACKGROUND

Today about 25 million kids ages 2-19 in the United States are overweight or at risk of becoming overweight - that's nearly one of every three kids.¹ Some experts believe that if obesity among kids continues to increase at this rate, our current generation could become the first in American history to live shorter lives than their parents.²

Studies show kids are consuming more soda, candy and fast food, and spending more time in front of the TV, play station or computer. In addition, there are fewer school programs dedicated to physical fitness and health education, and finding places for kids to get outside and play or exercise is also becoming increasingly difficult and, in some cases, unsafe.

The result of all of these factors is an increase in serious health problems earlier in life. Obese children are at higher risk of becoming overweight adults. With that, comes the increased possibility of developing high cholesterol, high blood pressure, stroke, type 2 diabetes and asthma. But the problems aren't limited to physical health; overweight children are also at risk for depression, eating disorders and behavioral and learning problems, as well.³

Helping kids get and stay healthy isn't easy. Monitoring what they eat at school and in social situations isn't always realistic. Experts suggest that successful intervention and prevention of childhood obesity starts at home. Getting children motivated and helping them maintain new behaviors are the keys to successful weight management.⁴ By taking an active role and educating children about health and fitness, parents and caregivers can help develop positive family habits that will enable everyone to get and stay fit.

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¹ Mayo Clinic: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/childhood-obesity/DS00698>

² American Heart Association Alliance for a Healthier Generation: <http://www.healthiergeneration.org/about.aspx?id=312>

³ Mayo Clinic: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/childhood-obesity/DS00698>

⁴ Barlow S, Dietz W. Obesity evaluation and treatment: Expert Committee recommendations. Pediatrics 1998; 102:E2910.