

The Problem of Overweight and Obesity in Adolescents

By

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The incidence of overweight adolescents aged twelve to nineteen years of age in the United States has nearly **tripled** in the past decade. Consequently problems with high cholesterol, and high blood pressure, which are risk factors for heart disease, have also increased. Additional related health issues include Type 2 diabetes, which was previously considered an adult disease.

Overweight teens have approximately a 70% chance of being overweight adults.

Overweight in adolescents is generally caused by unhealthy eating patterns and lack of physical activity. Americans live in a sedentary society, which tempts us with television, computer and video games. Studies have revealed that approximately 45% of adolescents watch television more than two hours a day. Girls, for one reason or another, become less active as they move through adolescence.

Physicians and/or other health care professionals can determine whether an adolescent's weight is healthy, and they can also help rule out associated rare medical problems. Most overweight adolescents are very much aware of their weight problem as many have already suffered from social discrimination, poor self-esteem and depression. They need parental support, and encouragement.

In working with an overweight teen the focus should be on the child's health not the weight. Perhaps a gradual change in the family's physical activity and eating habits can be explored. Modeling behavior such as enjoying health foods and physical activity can have quite an impact on the adolescent. He or she is more likely to do the same as other family members and establish new and healthier patterns. Weight control must be considered a lifelong effort.

www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines

www.healthfinder.gov

www.MyPyramid.gov

www.Nutrition.gov

www.Recreation.gov