Assess What Contributes to the Increasing Number of Overweight Children

Natalya Hurska

Childhood obesity is one of the worldwide problems of the 21st century. The number of children who suffer from this disease is increasing at alarming rates. There are many factors that contribute to the developing of childhood overweight. Scientists distinguish the following ones: environmental factors, cultural environment, genetic factors, lifestyle preferences and even the treatment of parents towards their children.

One of the main causes of childhood overweight is unhealthy food, since nowadays children prefer high fats and sugar foods instead of healthy ones. Of course, it is the obligation of parents to control what their children eat. But quite often they cannot prevent them from buying different kinds of sweets or bags of chips which are advertised everywhere or from visiting, for instance, McDonalds or places like that where unhealthy food is served. So, it is not only the problem of parents but of society in general where healthy food is not so popularized and advertised.

The other important reason why there are a lot of overweight children is lack of physical activity. It was proved by many scientists that sedentary behavior like watching TV and playing computer games are associated with increased prevalence of obesity [Swinburn, 2002].

Nowadays children do not like walking or playing games outside. They prefer playing computer games, communicating with their friends virtually, watching different programs on TV. For example, it was investigated that in the USA children are spending more than 25% of their waking hours in front of the television set [Robinson, 2001]. So, again it is a problem of society that creates new and new devices for children which on one hand help them and on the other hand have a bad influence on their health and, of course, it is a problem of parents who prefer having their children watch TV or play computer games at home rather than walking or playing outside unattended because parents want to do their chores at that time. Furthermore, some parents forget to make their kids do morning gymnastics or, moreover, some of them forbid their children to play sport games or ride bikes, because they worry about their health and life.

There are many other factors that cause childhood overweight, but first of all parents are responsible for their children’s health, so they should take care of them. They should remember that prevention could be the key strategy for controlling the increasing number of obesity [Muller, 2001]. Parents ought to control what their children eat, do, how they play, etc. They should not forget about their own bright example for their progeny.

**References**

Swinburn B, Egger G. (2002) Preventive strategies against weight gain and obesity. Obes Rev, 3: 289-301

Robinson Thomas N. (2001). Television viewing and childhood obesity. [Pediatric Clinics of North America](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/00313955), 48 (4), pp. 1017-1025

Muller MJ, Mast M, Asbeck I, Langnase K, Grund A. (2001) **Prevention of obesity--is it possible?**Obes Rev, **2:**15-28