

Childhood Obesity: Caused by Technology?

By: Riley Kole
The Walker School
8th Grade Project Y Section
Teacher: Mr. Surkan
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Childhood obesity rates have skyrocketed over the past 20 years. The obesity epidemic has been caused by many factors, primarily excessive technology use and poor eating habits. Which one is the main cause of this nationwide problem? Adolescent obesity is becoming a significant concern, as it is effecting teens in a variety of ways. Significant health risks, lack of physical activity and low self-esteem are just some of the results of adolescents in the United States growing horizontally rather than vertically. Is this epidemic being caused by a lifestyle of hours spent in front of the computer and television? Or by poor nutrition and fast food eating?

Childhood obesity is defined as an excessive accumulation of body fat. Fourteen percent of adolescents in America are obese and at risk for type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease (Troubled Teen 101). This percentage has more than doubled over the past twenty years, caused mostly by the lack of physical activity and unhealthy eating. New technologies and foods that are produced more with marketing than nutrition in mind are more prevalent in today's society than ever before. Television, gaming systems, iPods, computers, and more modern technologies are examples of things that keep children on the couch rather than in the fields. According to the online source *Troubled Teen 101*, studies have shown that 43% of teenagers watch more than two hours of television per day. Studies have also found that teens that watch up to 3 hours of television a day have between a 17-44% chance of being obese (Troubled Teen 101). After the time children spend on these new technologies, they have little time to exercise or maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Entertainment-based technology is not the only technology that is hurting the health of young Americans. Because of new technology in the food industry, food has

become cheaper and more convenient but less healthy. Today's generation has grown up surrounded by fast food chains, advertising, and more, making them accustomed to and more comfortable with the concept of fast food, without knowing any of the information behind it. Every month, approximately nine out of 10 American children visit a McDonald's restaurant (Spurlock). Also availability of junk food in schools is common with numerous vending machines selling chips, sodas, and candy bars.

Parents are breeding obesity in their own homes as they let teenagers spend all of their time in front of the television or on the computer. While teens continue to sit immobile for hours watching television or playing video games, they do not leave time to exercise or eat a nutritional meal. Studies have found that teens that watch up to 3 hours of television a day have between a 17-44% chance of being obese. (Fals) In a report, Dr. William Dietz says, "of all the ways of tackling this problem, TV reduction appears to be the most effective measure in reducing weight gain in this population (Dietz.)". The availability of technology is creating an inactive lifestyle for children and causing weight gain all around the world.

Modern technology has become an every day part of kid's lives. Studies indicate that the availability of technology contributes to a sedentary lifestyle and weight gain in children (Cespedes). While adolescents are at home playing video games and watching television they do not leave time to exercise or eat nutritional meals. A recent study of the Department of Education's Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey found that "a one-hour increase in physical education per week resulted in a 0.31 point drop in body mass index among overweight and at-risk first grade girls. (Datar). BMI is a calculation of how much body fat you have determined on your weight and height. BMI is a good way to tell

how unhealthy a person is. With popular technology such as the Wii, iPod games, and even social networks like Facebook are keeping kids from exercising daily and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

While many children are becoming overweight, the heavy children are getting even heavier. Childhood obesity is looked at as the most common nutritional disorder of American children and adolescents. In general, teens are eating too much away from home, drinking too many sugar sweetened drinks, and snacking more often. Convenience has become one of the main criteria for America's food choices today, such as convenient snacks and unhealthy "TV. Dinners".

It is common for teens to turn to food for emotional reasons, like when they feel upset, sad, stressed out, anxious, or even bored. Teens are at a very emotional age. When this occurs, they eat more than they need. Obesity is bad for both teens body and mind. Not only can it make teens feel tired and uncomfortable, carrying extra weight puts extra stress on the body, particularly in the bones and joints of their legs. As they grow older, kids and teens that are obese are more likely to develop heart disease and diabetes. The nutrition and physical activity habits of adolescents have been changing over the past 40 years (Cameron). Preventing kids from becoming obese means adjusting the way their families eat and exercise, and how they spend time together. Helping kids have healthy lifestyles starts with parents who lead by example.

Along with food and parental influences there are plenty of other factors that contribute to obesity, but television is a primary example of how technology and childhood obesity combine to the damage of our health. Children have begun to watch television continuously sitting for hours at-a-time entirely inactive. Over-eating is many

times a function of television watching, and associated with inactivity can be a harmful and unhealthy past time, especially for children (Radisson). Limiting the amount of time a child spends in front of the television or computer may be a good way for parents to reduce the risk of obesity in adolescents. Because parents' television viewing habits directly influences their children's, parents must serve as role models.

As the world progresses people do not have time for anything, parents are consumed in there jobs, as they want to be successful and give there family a wealthy living and kids are attending after school classes such as martial arts, singing or dancing lessons (Burke). So they are making unhealthy choices and eating food that has very low nutritional value. Also they are wrapped up in their television not leaving time for exercise. Both the television and the food industry have taken over as the most important past time for youth and has restructured our lifestyle. There are a number of other factors that contribute to obesity, Fast food and technology being some of them.

Obese children are always at risk as children and as adults. These children are more likely to be obese when they are an adult and more likely to raise an obese child. Obese children follow in their parent's footsteps and become overweight. The society presently is very inactive and it lacks exercise, and healthy eating habits. Children are living these days with all of these problems that need to be solved. Technology is promoting this sedentary lifestyle and fast food companies are becoming larger everyday. There are plenty of primary examples that contribute to obesity. Although for teenage obesity, in this generation, television is an important main factor. Like Adelle Davis said "To say that obesity is caused by merely consuming too many calories is like saying that the only cause of the American Revolution was the Boston Tea Party" (Davis).

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