

## **CHILD OBESITY EPIDEMIC**

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The developed world is suffering an obesity epidemic, with large numbers of children seriously overweight, according to some new research (APA Monitor, January, 2000). The number of obese children has almost doubled in the past two decades and the findings also point to increased adult obesity.

Children in large cities with poorly educated parents are at the greatest risk according to these researchers. These are problems that will only continue to become out of control and most likely will have long-term consequences,

These researchers collected weight and height details for 14,500 children between 1996 and 1997 and found that 13% were overweight. They defined being overweight as having a body mass index of more than 25lbs for normal weight and height. They also found that the age at which weight flattens out during childhood, known as adiposity, had fallen from six-years-old in 1980 to five-and-a-half in 1997. The earlier this occurs, the greater the chance of obesity in adulthood they found. They surmised that it is as a result of most children not eating breakfast, snacking and eating too many foods containing invisible fats.

### **Public Education**

This study recommended some type of public education program to tackle child obesity. Writing in because adverse health effects later in life might be consequent upon childhood obesity, they recommend that obesity prevention early in life should be a priority in child public health care.

They also found that the amount of obesity in children has risen from 5% in the late 1980s to as much as 17% in the 15-year-old age group in the late 1990s. We seem to be storing up problems for the future. I have no doubt that we should be concerned about the long-term implications.