Childhood Obesity in America

David H. Adams
Beeber Middle School

Abstract

Childhood obesity in America has been on the rise and has reached a level higher than elsewhere in the world. Obesity is defined as an excessive accumulation of body fat. Fast food, food high in fat or sugar, processed foods and poor diets are contributing factors to this problem; genetic and hormonal causes may also be factors. Children and adolescents that are obese face serious health and social issues that may impact their self-esteem, or future well being, as an adult.

In the United States between 5 and 25% of children and teenagers are obese. Children that are obese as a child will most likely be overweight or obese as an adult (as high as 80%). As with adult-onset obesity, childhood obesity has multiple causes that center around an imbalance between energy consumed (calories obtained from food) and energy expended (calories expended in the basal metabolic rate and physical activities). Childhood obesity most likely results from a combination of nutritional, psychological, familial, and physiological factors (ERIC Digest 1990 ED.328506).

It is my strong belief that obesity would be easier to prevent than to treat, so the main focus of this unit will be educating students to make healthy food choices, build self-esteem and exercise on a daily basis. Diet management, heredity and metabolic factors, social and emotional disorders will be explored.

This unit will be taught at Dimner Beeber Middle School, located in the Wynnefield section of the city, to 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students during their Science Lab classes. The periods are seventy five minutes long and the students come once a week. The lessons from this unit may be adapted for classes of different lengths.