



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Young and Fit

Obesity Among Low-Income Preschool-Aged Children – United States, 2008-2011

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[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

In the U.S., too many children are overweight. Although rates are improving, still, one in six kids between the ages of two and 19 is obese.

Dr. Ashleigh May is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. She's joining us today to discuss how important it is for children to maintain a healthy weight. Welcome to the show, Ashleigh.

[Dr. May] Thank you for having me.

[Dr. Gaynes] Ashleigh, define obesity for us.

[Dr. May] We define obesity based on something called Body Mass Index, or BMI, which is based on children's height, weight, age, and sex. Obesity is defined as being at or above the 95th percentile.

[Dr. Gaynes] What is contributing to childhood obesity?

[Dr. May] At the individual level, eating more calories than one uses, or burns, can lead to excess weight gain. But we also know that environments are important—where children live, learn, and play—such as child care setting, home, broader community—can also influence which foods are available to them, as well as opportunities to be physically active.

[Dr. Gaynes] Ashleigh, what health problems can result from obesity?

[Dr. May] During childhood, things like high cholesterol, high blood sugar, asthma, and even mental health problems can occur. And children who are overweight or obese are more likely to become overweight or obese adults. And during adulthood, obesity is associated with type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and mental health problems, as well.

[Dr. Gaynes] Give us some tips for maintaining a healthy weight.

[Dr. May] Well, it's two-fold. Parents and caregivers can help children by providing fruits and vegetables, whole grains, other food items, opportunities to be physically active, limiting screen time, and also being role models for healthy eating and physical activities. Communities can also play a role, including the childcare setting, schools, by providing healthy food access, and safe places for children to be physically active.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information about childhood obesity?

[Dr. May] They can visit cdc.gov/obesity.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Ashleigh. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Ashleigh May who discussed the importance of maintaining a healthy weight early in life.

Remember, you can help kids get a healthy start. Encourage them to exercise regularly and eat a diet that's low in fat and includes fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Be a role model for healthy eating and physical activity, and support your community's efforts to provide healthy food options and safe places for children to play.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.