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Introduction

In the United States, the percentage of child obesity is about 19%, with approximately about 14.4 million children in the United States alone. The parents of these children are most to blame, but due to some family's circumstances, the unhealthiest foods in the market are the most affordable. My question is, why is junk food so normalized for young kids? Why are foods such as high sugar candies and sodas given to kids to eat and drink regularly? Why aren't healthier foods for children being more pushed onto society? I have little sisters myself, and when I go to the grocery store, I notice that they gravitate mostly to very unhealthy junk foods. I personally don't blame them; the brands in grocery stores have excellent marketing strategies, and I feel drawn to these foods myself. So, I can see how easily children can be influenced to try and love these foods. Children don't know what foods are the best for their health, and it's up to the children's parents to teach them how to eat the best foods for their health. I understand children can be very picky about healthier foods such as vegetables, but a child's health should be a priority in today's society.

I expect to find information about how brands use marketing strategies to influence children to buy unhealthy foods. I also would like to see stories about the parents of obese children. What are their living conditions like? Are the parents possibly obese themselves? Many factors may lead to obesity in children, and I believe it begins with the parents. I would also like to find scientific facts on how healthier foods for children are the most beneficial to them. There have to be scientific facts on how children who eat more nutritious foods allow children to be stronger-minded students in school, have stronger memory, and develop more skills.

Citation #1

Beyond the Data - Preventing Childhood Obesity: Eating Better, Moving More - Youtube.com. *YouTube*, CDC, 19 July 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5nXSCEXDUuw>.

Summary

In this video, Dr. John Iskander and Captain Hiedi Blank, CDC's chief for obesity prevention and control, speak about obesity prevention and the facts behind obesity. When

children are obese, there are at risk of many health conditions, such as bone structure problems, sleep apnea, and mental health issues. As obesity continues in children, it goes into adulthood and may cause physical health issues. Examples like type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease, and the CDC has linked 13 cancers to obesity. As I stated earlier, child obesity is mostly the child's parents' fault, and Captain Blank has heard from many parents that they think their children being obese is just a phase in their life, and as they get older, they'll "grow" out of it. A healthy lifestyle for children has food with lower calories and higher nutrition, like fruits and vegetables, enough physical activity, reduced screen time, stress management, and better sleeping schedules. The CDC recommends the 10 5 2 1 0 lifestyle. 10 hours of sleep, 5 fruits and vegetables, less than 2 hours of screen time, 1 hour of physical activity, and 0 sugary drinks. The CDC has a few school health guidelines to prevent obesity in children. During lunchtime, the children have access to healthier foods, more water fountains, and longer physical education classes.

Reflection

After watching this YouTube video, my thoughts on parents are the majority of the issue regarding childhood obesity were true. As captain Blank said, many parents she has spoken to believe that their obese children will grow out of their "obese" stage and don't truly realize the dangers of being obese at a young age. Being obese as early as the age of two shouldn't be considered a stage a child should grow out of but an eye wakening health issue for that child. Parents should consider taking this issue seriously, so the child doesn't suffer from critical health issues early. The child is too young to take care of and feed themselves the right nutritious foods, so the parents need to step up and help their children. I agree with the 10 5 2 1 0 lifestyle approach for children, and it's the perfect balance for a child to live a happy and healthy life.

Quotation

"Unfortunately, we have a bulk of evidence and data from our national surveys as well as modeling exercises that they really show children are on a trajectory toward obesity," said Captain Heidi Blank.

Citation #2

Singh S, Ankul, et al. *Junk Food-Induced Obesity- a Growing Threat to Youngsters during the Pandemic*, Elsevier Ltd., Sept.2021, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8459649/.

Summary

In this article, Ph.D. doctors speak about the effects of junk foods on children. In today's society, obesity is linked with factors with the production of cortisol—food consumption with a

high glycaemic index, chronic stress, and change in sleep patterns. Studies have proven that junk food is the main factor in obesity. About 60% of obese children have at least one risk of cardiovascular diseases, such as raised blood pressure, hyperlipidemia, and hyperinsulinemia. And about 20% of obese children are at risk of two or more risk health factors. There are about 14.4 million obese children globally, and the United States is at the top, and India follows next with the most obese children. Childhood obesity alters a child's immune system by causing changes in the cytokines concentrations and proteins and the number and function of the immune cells, ultimately leading to a pro-inflammatory condition, leading to the onset or exacerbation of numerous diseases like asthma, atopic dermatitis, allergy and sleep apnea. The Covid-19 global pandemic is another massive factor in why more children have become obese. Children being home all day has left them bored and turning to eat junk food for emotional support. Obesity can significantly damage a child's intellect and personality.

Reflection

After reading this article, I've truly realized the fundamental risk factors of eating junk food for children and every person. After the Covid-19 global pandemic, many more people are at higher risk of obesity and cardiovascular diseases. I agree that the food we eat will be able to help us fight off illnesses such as the coronavirus. However, as long as people are eating way too much junk food daily, they're less likely to be able to fight off covid-19 in a less risky way and cause themselves long-term damage. I was interested in how the authors included the tables that show what kinds of foods cause risks in human bodies and the actual risks of these foods. The author's intended audience seems to be to parents, whether their children are obese or not. These doctors are trying to prove to parents how risky a massive consumption of junk food is to their children and themselves.

Quotation

"There is an urgent need to spread awareness among children and young adults about these adverse effects of junk food, and they are not a good substitute for good healthy nourishment."

Citation #3

Mazewski, Joanna, and Joanna Joanna Mazewski (441 Articles Published). "Study Shows Stressed Parents Feed Their Kids More Junk Food." *BabyGaga*, 5 May 2019, www.babygaga.com/study-shows-stressed-parents-feed-kids-more-junk-food/.

Summary

Studies have shown that parents who feel stressed or overworked feed their children more junk food and fast food in this article. They don't have the time or energy to give their children any healthy food after coming home from a long day at work. According to a team of researchers from Duke University and NYU, most food given to children is a high-calorie food, and it is all junk food. This leads to children eating unhealthy snacks such as chips and candies instead of healthy fruits like apples and oranges or healthy vegetables. According to the article, "Professor Myoungock Jang admits that stress makes us choose unhealthy snacks and meals as "comfort food" to cope with stress." This is an agreeable statement because junk food helps people elevate their moods. It is hard for parents that undergo stress and have no time to feed their children healthy food. Professor Myoungock also mentioned, "The less healthy food is available in the home, the more unhealthy the feeding practices are for their children. They often didn't feel they had enough energy and time to prepare food at home." This explains how parents tend to be exhausted and do not have any time to prepare healthy food for their kids, so they either bring home fast food or have the kids eat ready-made unhealthy food. The only solution to this problem is having an older family member or having a close friend to help prepare healthy cooked food at home while the parents are at work.

Reflection

After reading this article, I agree with parents who are stressed or overworked and feed their children unhealthy food. Many parents work many hours and come home late, and do not have any time to prepare dinner for their children. As mentioned in the article, "Parents who were the most stressed out were the ones who either had very little time on their hands or not enough help at home. They were either overworked, exhausted, or just tired from the day-to-day grind." This is a clear explanation of why children eat unhealthy food because their parents are stressed or overworked. Although the parents do not have any time to prepare healthy food for their children, I believe there are other solutions where they could prepare something quick and leave it for their children. Having a family member or a close friend prepare healthy food for their children could be a bother, so preparing something healthy quickly could be an alternative.

Quotation

"The less healthy food is available in the home, the more unhealthy the feeding practices are for their children. They often didn't feel they had enough energy and time to prepare food at home."

Conclusion

Overall, I've reached a good understanding of the questions I've had while researching childhood obesity. I've also concluded that parents are mainly why children become obese and struggle with physical and mental health illnesses. The lack of fruit and vegetable consumption, lack of activity, stress, and sleep hours are why children become obese. I understand children are not easy to deal with, especially picky children who don't like fruits or vegetables but introducing junk food at an early age is the reason children don't like fruits and vegetables and always turn to junk food. I've learned that the best approach for a healthy lifestyle for children is the 10 5 2 1 0 approach. I think parents who have young children should know all about the real risks of feeding their children lots of junk food. Parents should also stop believing that their children being obese is just a stage that they'll "grow" out of. Children don't just grow out of being obese. Being obese affects their overall well-being, and a child can't grow out of being obese simply. The ignorance needs to end, and parents need to care for their children's health.