



PRESS RELEASE FOR LOCAL MEDIA

Central Michigan District Health Department
"Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities"

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To: Local Media

From: Scott R. Miller, Health Educator

RE: Childhood Obesity

Release Date: March 2013

**DECREASE IN CHILDHOOD OBESITY NUMBERS
NOT END OF PROBLEM FOR MANY AMERICAN FAMILIES
Prevalence of Obesity Tripled in Just One Generation**

According to data collected from a national study by the Journal of the American Medical Association and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), obesity and extreme obesity rates have declined among America's low-income preschool children for the first time since 2003.

From 2003 through 2010, obesity rates decreased slightly from 15.21% to 14.94%. Similarly, those of extreme obesity decreased from 2.22% to 2.07%. However, from 1998 through 2003, the occurrence of obesity increased from 13.05% to 15.21%, and rates of extreme obesity increased from 1.75% to 2.22%. This trend shows that obesity currently affects 17% of children and adolescents throughout the United States - triple the rate from just one generation ago.

According to the CDC, childhood obesity can have harmful effects on the body in many ways. Obese children, when compared to their non-obese peers, are more likely to have high blood pressure and high cholesterol, risk factors for cardiovascular disease (CVD). In fact, one study revealed a staggering 70% of obese children had at least one CVD risk factor, and 39% had two or more. Other health factors influenced by obesity include: increased risk of impaired glucose tolerance, insulin resistance, type 2 diabetes, breathing problems like sleep apnea and asthma, joint problems, musculoskeletal discomfort, liver disease, gallstones, and gastro-esophageal reflux (heartburn). The studies also show that obese children and adolescents have a greater risk of problems such as discrimination and poor self-esteem.

The CDC encourages that healthy eating habits and physical activity begin at an early age, as health risks have been shown to increase in heavier and more inactive children as they age. In other words, obese children are more likely to become obese adults. Adult obesity is also associated with a number of serious health conditions including heart disease, diabetes, and some cancers. And, according to the studies, if children are overweight, obesity in adulthood is likely to be more severe. Aside from individual health concerns, the medical care costs of obesity on a national level are also of concern. In 2008 these costs totaled about \$147 billion, and these costs continue to rise.

It is important to note the distinction between “obese” and “overweight” in children and adolescents. Both are determined just as they are for adults, by measuring an individual’s body mass index (BMI). BMI is calculated using a child's weight and height, but does not measure body fat directly. A child's weight status is determined using an age- and sex-specific percentile for BMI rather than the BMI categories used for adults because children's body composition varies as they age and also varies between boys and girls. As such, it is a reasonable indicator of body fatness for most children and teens. CDC Growth Charts are used to determine the corresponding BMI-for-age and sex percentile. For children and adolescents aged 2—19 years:

- “Overweight” is defined as having a BMI at or above the 85th percentile and lower than the 95th percentile for children of the same age and sex.
- Obesity is defined as having a BMI at or above the 95th percentile for children of the same age and sex.

To calculate the BMI for your child, visit the CDC’s automatic BMI Percentile Calculator for Child and Teen at <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/dnpabmi/>.

If you would like an opportunity to get involved to prevent childhood obesity, consider joining Together We Can. Together We Can is a community project aimed at improving health status in the central Michigan counties of Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola, and Roscommon. The *County Health Rankings* in central Michigan are among the worst in the state—TOGETHER WE CAN change that! For more information LIKE Together We Can on Facebook or email us at TogetherWeCan@cmdhd.org.

This article has been brought to you by Central Michigan District Health Department, which serves the counties of Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola and Roscommon. Visit our website at www.cmdhd.org and LIKE Central Michigan District Health Department on Facebook.

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