



ABOUT THE CHILDREN'S HEALTH CRISIS

As part of its mission to educate parents and communities about the connection between children's health, behavior and learning, Better School Food offers these reasons to get involved in the movement to improve school food:

- One in three children are overweight; one in seven are obese. These rates have doubled in children and tripled in adolescents in the last twenty years. An overweight four-year old is 20% more likely to become an obese adult; an overweight teen, eighty percent. ⁱ
- The health care costs associated with diet-related illnesses are staggering and may soon exceed those associated with cigarette smoking: in 2000, the total cost of obesity was estimated at \$117 billion; in 2002 the costs related to diabetes were \$32 billion. ⁱⁱ
- 1 in 3 Americans born in 2000 will have diabetes in their lifetime. Diabetes is on the rise in young people of all ethnic groups; Type 2 diabetes can no longer be called "adult onset" because of rising rates in children. ⁱⁱⁱ
- America's tweens more than doubled their use of type-2 diabetes medications between 2002 and 2005, with girls between 10 and 14 years of age showing a 166 percent increase. The likely cause: obesity, which is closely associated with Type 2 diabetes. ^{iv}
- The number of teens taking prescription drugs for other diet-related illnesses is up: between 2001-2006, ADHD drugs up 74% for girls, 37% for boys; sleep aids up more than 80% in girls and 64% in boys; drug use for depression and psychoses have also increased. ^v
- Poor diet has been linked to attention deficit disorder, depression, Alzheimer's disease and schizophrenia. ^{vi}
- Childhood overweight is regarded as the most common prevalent nutritional disorder of US children and adolescents, and one of the most common problems seen by pediatricians. ^{vii}
- Children who are overweight are at greater risk for high cholesterol, high blood pressure, insulin resistance, menstrual irregularities, depression, low self-esteem, asthma, sleep apnea, increased risk of heart disease, orthopedic complications and liver disease. ^{viii}
- More young people will have diabetes for a longer time, which increases the rate of severe complications like blindness, heart disease, stroke, and amputations (likely in their 30's and 40's). According to diabetes researchers, some teenagers are already developing complications from type 2 diabetes. ^{ix}
- More than a quarter of U.S. preschoolers have tooth decay; if the best predictor of cavities in permanent teeth is the number of cavities in baby teeth, the next generation of adolescents could see a significant decline in dental health. Diet and nutrition play a significant role: high frequency ingestion of empty sugary calories will produce both decay and obesity. ^x

- Poor nutrition has been linked to poor academic performance; studies have also shown that children who eat breakfast seem to have an easier time learning as demonstrated through ability to concentrate, fewer errors, and higher test scores. Children who eat breakfast are more likely to be in school as demonstrated by fewer absences, less tardiness, less time spent in school nurse's office.^{xi}
- Poor eating habits leading to a vitamin D and calcium deficiencies in young people may lead to brittle bones; bone fractures in teen boys and girls went up by 42% in the last 30 years. Twenty years ago, boys and girls consumed more milk than soda—today, children consume twice as much soda as milk.^{xii}
- While a number of different factors cause tooth decay, the American Dental Association concludes that sugary drinks increases the risk of dental caries and the low pH of soda can cause tooth erosion.^{xiii}
- 30% to 40% of all cancers are related to diet, exercise and weight.^{xiv}
- One in ten children suffer from depression. Experts believe that one third of children who have depression will develop bipolar disorder later in life; the increase is attributed to a major shift in fat intake: more soy, corn, and cottonseed oils which contribute to a diet high in Omega-6 and low in Omega-3 fatty acids (previously 1:1 ratio, now 20:1).^{xv}
- According to the 2005 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 32% of adolescent girls believed they were overweight and 61% were attempting to lose weight. A 2006 study found that 57% of girls and 33% of boys used cigarettes, fasting, or skipping meals to lose weight. Diet pill intake by teenage girls has nearly doubled in 5 years. Last year nearly 5000 teens opted for liposuction.^{xvi}
- Nonalcoholic Fatty Liver Disease (NAFLD) It is a completely new occurrence of a disease of the liver, formerly only seen in adults who have a history of alcohol abuse. NAFLD is the most common liver disease in children today. It goes hand in hand with Insulin resistance and high BMI.^{xvii}

ⁱ Obesity: Overview and strategy. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. 17 Nov. 2007 <http://www.rwjf.org/pr/topic.jsp?topicid=1024>

ⁱⁱ "The Health and Economic Costs of Childhood Overweight", Business Group Health, 01 Nov 2007, www.businessgrouphealth.org/prevention/caobesitytoolkit/childobesity_slideset.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ Diabetes: Disabling Disease to Double by 2050, At A Glance 2007, 10 Nov. 2007, www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/publications/aag/ddt.htm

^{iv} "Tweens Double Use of Diabetes Drugs," Medical News Today, 09 Nov. 2007, <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/88261.php>

^v "Growth in Medication Use in Children, 2001-2006," Medco Health Solutions. 17 May 2007,

<http://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=81184>

^{vi} Feeding Minds: The Impact of Food on Mental Health, <http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/media/news-releases/news-releases-2006/16-january-2006/>

^{vii} "Childhood Overweight," The Obesity Society, 11 Nov. 2007, http://www.naaso.org/information/childhood_overweight.asp

^{viii} "The Health and Economic Costs of Childhood Overweight", Business Group Health, 01 Nov 2007,

www.businessgrouphealth.org/prevention/caobesitytoolkit/childobesity_slideset.pdf

^{ix} The Challenge of Type 2 Diabetes in Children, Food Insight, IFIC, Jan/Feb 2003, www.ific.org/foodinsight/2003/jf/diabetesfi103.cfm?renderforprint=1

^x New York Times, September 13, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/13/health/13teet.html>

^{xi} Center on Hunger, Poverty, and Nutrition Policy. The Link Between Nutrition and Cognitive Development in Children. Policy Statement. Medford, MA: Tufts University School of Nutrition; 1995, http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/pdf/LC_Color_120204_final.pdf

^{xii} Liquid Candy: How Soft drinks Are Harming Americans' Health. CSPI, 1998. <http://www.healthline.com/eatingwell/etw-a-plague-of-brittle-bones>

^{xiii} American Dental Association, Joint Report of the ADA Council on Access, Prevention, and Interprofessional Relations: Response to Resolution 73H-2000. Oct. 2001.

^{xiv} Data from American Institute for Cancer Research 1997

^{xv} Hibbeln: Lancet 1998

^{xvi} American Society of Plastic Surgeons

^{xvii} Steven M. Schwarz, M.D. FAAP, FACN)