

## Childhood Obesity By Garland Johnson

16 percent of children (over 9 million) 6-19 years old are overweight or obese—a number that has tripled since 1980.  
(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Over the past three decades, the childhood obesity rate has more than doubled for preschool children aged 2-5 years and adolescents aged 12-19 years. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Over the past three decades, the childhood obesity rate has more than tripled for children aged 6-11 years. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Obesity-associated annual hospital costs for children and youth more than tripled over two decades, rising from \$35 million in 1979-1981 to \$127 million in 1997-1999. ("Preventing Childhood Obesity: Health in the Balance, 2005." Institute of Medicine)

According to a national study, 92 percent of elementary schools do not provide daily physical education classes for all students throughout the entire year. (School Health Policies and Programs Study. Journal of School Health 2001:71[7])

Just 47 percent of middle/junior high schools and 26 percent of high schools require at least 3 years of physical education. (Pate, Small et al., 1995)

Physical education has been associated with increased academic performance, self-concept, mood and mental health, the promotion of physical activity and exercise may also improve quality of life. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

### From the US Surgeon General

300,000 deaths each year in the United States are associated with obesity.

Overweight and obesity are associated with an increased risk for some types of cancer including endometrial (cancer of the lining of the uterus), colon, gall bladder, prostate, kidney and postmenopausal breast cancer.

Risk factors for heart disease, such as high cholesterol and high blood pressure, occur with increased frequency in overweight children and adolescents compared to those with a healthy weight.

Type II Diabetes, previously considered an adult disease, has increased dramatically in children and adolescents.

The most immediate consequence of being overweight, as perceived by children themselves, is social discrimination.

Of children diagnosed with Type II Diabetes, 85% are obese. Overweight and obesity are closely linked to Type II Diabetes.

The economic cost of obesity in the United States was about \$117 billion in 2000.

It is recommended that Americans accumulate at least 30 minutes (adults) or 60 minutes (children) of moderate physical activity most days of the week. More may be needed to prevent weight gain, to lose weight or maintain weight loss.

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### From the US Department of Health and Human Services

Physical activity declines dramatically over the course of adolescence, and girls are significantly less likely than boys to participate in vigorous physical activity.

Nearly 50 million adults (between the ages of 20 and 74), or 27% of the adult population, are obese; overall over more than 108 million adults, or 61% of the adult population are either obese or overweight.

Overweight adolescents have a 70% chance of becoming overweight or obese adults. This increases to 80% if one or more parent is overweight or obese.

Forty-three percent of students in grades 9-12 watch television more than two hours a day.

In a 1993 study, 14% of all deaths in the United States were attributed to activity patterns and diet.

Another study linked sedentary lifestyles to 23% of deaths from major chronic diseases. For example, physical activity has been shown to reduce the risk of developing or dying from heart disease, diabetes, colon cancer and high blood pressure.

On average, people who are physically active outlive those who are inactive.

Two final points:

1. A 40-year-old nonsmoking male who is obese will lose 5.8 years of life expectancy.
2. A 40-year-old nonsmoking female who is obese will lose 7.1 years of life expectancy.

(Peeters A, Barendse JJ, Willekens F, Mackenbach JP, Al Marnun A, Bonneux L. Overweight and obesity by middle age are associated with shortened lifespan. *Ann Intern Med* 2003; 24-32)