



Obesity in children occurs when there is a generalized excessive accumulation of fatty tissues in the body. It is due to disproportionate intake of food compared to its utilization. Usually a child is obese at one year (rate of normal growth is high), from four to six years (overeating and lack of activity) and during adolescence (rate of normal growth is high). Often psychological disturbances can be underlined. Consequences of being overweight may contribute towards hypertension, diabetes mellitus, proneness to heart diseases, weight bearing joints disease and psychological issues.

SYMPTOMS

The child is heavier, maybe taller than other children of his age, has a double chin, fatty chest and breasts, pendulous tummy, the genitalia is embedded inside the pubic fat making it look small, the nose, mouth, hands and feet also appear smaller and sharper.

CAUSES

- Hereditary
- Nutritional - overeating due to boredom, depression, greed or psychological causes
- Inactivity - most common cause being excess TV viewing and the burden of school work.
- Physiological-hormonal or metabolic disorders

CURE

Parents have to make conscious decisions on what is being placed on the table or offered as snack choices. Keeping children occupied in more physical activities is also a good idea to get them away from video games and television.

HEALTHY EATING

- Educate your child about natural low calorie healthy foods and restrict fats like butter, cream, cakes and candy from diet.
- Eating slowly and chewing food for a longer time. Ask the child to count mentally until 20 or 30 before swallowing the food in the mouth.
- A fixed place and time for eating meals. Avoid eating in front of the TV or while reading a book.
- Smaller portions and fewer helpings than the usual amount.
- Nutritious and low calorie snacks like carrots, apples, roasted grains or legumes.
- Eating a variety of foods satisfies the palate as well as provides more nutrition.
- Encourage extra fluid intake via soups and broths but not sodas.

CATEGORIZING FOOD FOR HEALTHY

EATING

- **Anytime Foods.** Apples, cucumber, celery, roasted grains and legumes.
- **Occasional Foods.** Pizzas and burgers.
- **Special Day Foods.** Cakes and ice creams.

ADEQUATE SLEEP

Adequate sleep of at least ten hours relieves mental and physical stress and aids in weight reduction.

ADOPTING AN ACTIVE LIFESTYLE

- Regular daily exercise or sports. Be firm about continuing it.
- Keep regular timings for the exercise so that they are not skipped for inconsequential reasons.
- Encourage games, walks in the park, dance workshops, swimming, aerobics etc.

THERAPY

Talk to your child in order to isolate reasons for unhappiness or an inferiority complex.

The Parents' ChatRoom

By: Dr. Maulik Trivedi



Q. Dr. Trivedi - I am 15 years old and have been dancing since I was 6. I am a classical as well as a very good Bollywood dancer. I really want to go to Mumbai to try my chances there - I feel I have great talent and that this is my true calling in life. My parents cannot understand this and feel I should first finish my education. They cannot entertain the thought of such a career choice. I can understand the importance of finishing my education, but want them to be open to the idea of letting me go to India during my summer breaks so I can explore my options there. I am getting extremely frustrated because I cannot get through to them. What should I do?

A: I can understand your frustration. It is not easy to accept your parents' decision when you feel so passionate about your future. In your perspective, they appear to be putting roadblocks in your path to achieving your destiny.

A wise person once said, "The shortest distance between two people is understanding." I suggest that you take a step back from your own perspective for a moment and try to reverse the roles and imagine if you were the parent in this situation. When you do this, try to *feel* the concern and fear that your parents must be feeling. What is wrong with having a desire to pursue a career that most parents of your cultural background do not envision as promising at the age of 16?

Once you have an understanding of the feelings of fear and concern that your parents must be experiencing, you will be in a better position to help them overcome their negative feelings. You can take a patient approach to help reassure them with information and a step-by-step plan of action. If you

are too quick or too assertive, you risk raising their anxiety, which will backfire and spoil your plans.

If you pace your efforts to win the understanding of your parents by showing a genuine interest in understanding them first, you will have demonstrated a maturity that will make it easier for them to trust you. So keep your passion for dancing alive and please keep CityMasala in mind for a feature interview when you hit stardom!

Q. Dear Dr. Trivedi - I am hoping you can help me. I have two daughters - ages 12 and 14 - who are lovely girls in every way but cannot get along with each other. They are extremely jealous of each another and fight ALL THE TIME. My husband doesn't think it's very serious and says that it will settle down after a few years. I am afraid that they will grow into adults who will hate each other and it breaks my heart to see how they constantly plot against one another. Should I think of getting them into counseling or am I over-reacting?

Feelings of jealousy are a common occurrence among people of similar ages and psychological development. Being sisters who live in the same home is an ideal setup for developing jealousy and in most cases, it is a normal and age-appropriate feeling to develop as in the case of your daughters.

Nevertheless, the longer and stronger a child feels jealous, the harder that feeling is to overcome. Sometimes, jealousy becomes an integral part of one's personality and leads to a disturbed and unstable life pattern.

Jealousy exists between your daughters because they perceive themselves as competing for the same things, whether it's clothes, money or even

time and affection of a parent. They are on an incessant chase to obtain what they perceive the other has. Jealous people must incorporate a lot of drama when they do this. They are trying to emotionally manipulate the situation in their favor by being dramatic which leads to discord and much tension.

As a parent, you want to break this pattern of perception. The best approach is to help each of them understand that they are individually unique people with their own interests and needs. They do not need to compete for the same things. They can allow one another to have more of something that the other does not want or need so much of.

You must also focus on improving their self-esteem. This is the antidote that runs low in people who are prone to feelings of insecurity and jealousy. With improved self-esteem comes the patience to be tolerant of others who appear to have more than us in certain situations. This resolves feelings of jealousy by helping us reason out that most people don't get what they want all the time.

A counselor's help can prove invaluable in your quest to accomplish this. A person trained in helping families (family therapist) can help you achieve what I have outlined above much faster and without so many hurdles. It would be a good idea especially if you are seeing jealousy burning away the emotional bonds in your family.

Dr. Trivedi is a Board-Certified Psychiatrist. He treats children, adolescents and adults. Please visit www.MINDvantage.com for more information.

Send your questions to: theparentschatroom@citymasala.com.