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ARE RESTAURANTS RESPONSIBLE FOR OBESITY IN CHILDREN?

Obesity is one of highest concern for children here in America. It is defined as the state in which a person becomes excessively overweight. Obesity is known to be caused mostly from over-eating and lack of exercise. Teens nowadays are said to be too inactive; they spend too much time playing games on the computer and watching television. In addition, eating too much junk-food is mostly linked to obesity and is a main contribution to the rising rate of obesity, or so it is thought. Doctors warn that obesity shortens life span of Americans. But others argue that children should not be blamed and labeled as being “lazy” or “inactive”. There are other things that cause obesity but most people choose to focus on the eating and inactivity.

In the American society, it is thought everyone is always on the go, working at a fast pace. They do not get much rest. When one does not schedule his time wisely he or she will overeat when he does get the time, causing overweight problems.

Scientists and doctors proved that sleep deprivation is a contribution to obesity. According to a report done by Nanci Hellmich, when we do not get enough sleep, we are “unable to curb our appetites”. In his article, “Sleep Loss May Equal Weight Gain” studies showed that “there is a hunger hormone called ghrelin that increases when one loses sleep time and another hormone

called leptin that decreases, which makes one feels full.” The hypothalamus of the brain, which regulates the control of appetite, is triggered when one is lacking sleep. People feel hungry when ghrelin levels are at its peak. When the leptin is low, it sends a signal to the brain to give update on the body’s energy balance. Dr. Van Cauter, sleep researcher of Chicago, who was involved in this study reported that both hormones "have been called the yin and yang of hunger. One is the accelerator for eating (ghrelin), and the other is the brake (leptin)."

“Air pollution may contribute to childhood obesity”, an internet article written by Rachael Rettner, on *My News Health Daily* reported that air pollution poses a risk of obesity to the unborn child reveals that obesity is caused by certain pollutants. Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, a pollutant released by coal, oil and diesel burning. PAH, is said to modify the body’s metabolic processes and disorder the hormonal patterns and is found in cigarettes. Studies have shown that mice, which were exposed to PAH gained a lot of weight, along with some pregnant women who were grouped differently. One set was exposed and the other had no contact with PAH. The ones that were exposed gave birth to babies, who in five years became obese, unlike the other set.

Did you know that stress is another cause one to gain weight? Yes, it happens when our body is stressed it creates anxiety, tension, and depression. Anxiety causes the body release the hormone adrenaline. Stressed is a considered a threat to the body’s health so a signal is sent to the brain that it needs to release a chemical or hormone that will fight off stress. The duty of the released adrenaline is to give us energy immediately. With the help of the cortisol, the person’s hunger is lessened, but over a long period of time, it refills the body as soon as the stress passes

through. The person would feel extremely hungry and have a greater desire to eat more. If the body constantly is stressed, then the more cortisol is produced. The more cortisol is used, the slower the body's metabolism.

A national Health Survey was done showed that too much television viewing could lead to obesity. Six thousand six hundred and seventy-one children were examined in on cycle ages 6-17. The time watching television and its effect on the body was observed. Results showed that there was a two percent increase in obesity for every hour they stayed watching television. This does not mean that it is a main cause of obesity. On most occasions of watching the television, those examined started to snack. A strong correlation was shown with watching the television, having in-between snacking and consuming high calorie foods being advertised on the television. Results showed that children who spent massive amount of time watching the television have more prevalence of obesity than those who spent less time in front of the television. Children spend less time in physical activities, reduces the rate of metabolism due to a lot of inactivity and increase calorie consumption.

Restaurants have been tagged with the blame for obesity epidemic. The journal article, "Are Fast-food Restaurants an Environmental Risk factor for Obesity?" written by Judy Baxter and Robert Jeffery et al. , shows a research done on restaurants and their contribution to obesity. The study was done to examine if those who live nearby fast-food restaurants are more likely to become obese. 1033 residents of Minnesota were surveyed via telephone and their body height and weight were recorded and how frequently they visit fast-food restaurants. The results showed that living near restaurants were associated with high fat diet and Body Mass Index. Restaurants are being asked to inform their customers of the fat contents and calories in the meal they are served. If businesses do not comply, the FDA will decide to seek legal authority. The aim of the

department is to lower the rate of obesity by persisting that restaurants show label their food so that people may be aware of what they are eating. Eating out is said to be a main factor in encouraging obesity. Eric Schlosser's book, Fast Food Nation, claims that as fast-food becomes increasingly more so does obesity in Americans. He does not put the responsibility on fast-food restaurants, but he claims that they are a main contribution to the increasing obesity. The widely accepted and cheap source of food makes it so addictive, but Eric states in his book that the abundance in high fat and calories are not a healthy choice. People choose to eat these inexpensive, delicious and unhealthy meals because they are readily available and convenient, especially in these busy times. However, with all these causes for obesity, how can we pin the blame on restaurants alone? Should it not be an individual responsibility? The blame should not be put solely on restaurants.

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