

Child Obesity: How the Community Can Help

Jennifer Salmons

Child obesity rates are dangerously high in our country. Obesity puts children at risk for heart disease and diabetes. Children represent the future. As a community, we are responsible for them. They need us to do the right thing and provide them with programs that they need. Here are some ideas for how we could support them to lose weight and live healthier lifestyles:

Fast Food Math

Add up the calories and fat found in this meal. What percent of your daily allowance of calories and fat would you get? Do you think restaurants should provide this information? Would it affect what you buy for yourself and your children?

FOOD	CALORIES	FAT
Hamburger	310	13
French fries (small)	230	11
Chocolate shake (small)	410	15
TOTAL IN THIS MEAL		
TOTAL RECOMMENDED DAILY ALLOWANCE	2000	65
% OF DAILY ALLOWANCE IN THIS MEAL		

Source: Nutrition information is based on items from a typical fast food restaurant. Visit <www.foodfacts.info> to look up nutrition information on other fast food menu items.

- We should make sure that schools give kids plenty of time to run around and play.
- Outside of school, our children should have access to free programs that help them get interested in fitness and a healthy lifestyle, such as swimming, sports, safe parks, and clean playgrounds. Sometimes people need a little encouragement to help them get motivated.
- Another thing the community could offer for free would be nutrition classes and seminars to teach healthy eating habits.
- Fast food restaurants should prominently display information about calories, fat, sodium, and vitamins in their food.
- School lunches should be low in fat and include fresh vegetables and fruits (see p. 33).
- We could organize more community walks for causes such as AIDS, elder care, and breast cancer to name a few. Whole families could participate together. People are more willing to do a physical activity if there is a cause behind it and if they are doing it with others.

How would the community pay for all these free activities? One idea is to have fundraisers. People would work together to raise money and then decide how the money should be spent. Another idea is to hold more community meetings where people can come and bring new ideas about how to spend money that has been raised. At these meetings, people could also decide how tax revenue should be spent.

Our children's future depends on what we do today to help them lead a healthier lifestyle. Let us get together as a community and fix the problem of child obesity. It is our job to protect the future.

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