



The Burden of Obesity: Common Diseases Affecting Children

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INTRODUCTION

Childhood obesity has become a global epidemic, and its prevalence continues to rise at an alarming rate. Beyond the immediate physical and emotional challenges, obese children face a significantly higher risk of developing various diseases and health complications. This article sheds light on some of the most common diseases affecting children due to obesity, emphasizing the importance of early intervention and preventive measures to safeguard their health and well-being. Traditionally considered an adult-onset disease, type 2 diabetes has now become increasingly prevalent in children due to the rise in childhood obesity. Excess body fat can lead to insulin resistance, a condition where the body's cells do not respond effectively to insulin, resulting in elevated blood sugar levels. Over time, this can progress to type 2 diabetes, a chronic condition that requires careful management and can have long-term health implications for affected children. Obese children are at an elevated risk of developing cardiovascular diseases, including hypertension high blood pressure and atherosclerosis narrowing and hardening of the arteries.

DESCRIPTION

The accumulation of cholesterol and fatty deposits in the arteries can lead to reduced blood flow to vital organs, increasing the risk of heart attacks and strokes even at a young age. Obesity is associated with an increased incidence and severity of asthma in children. The reasons for this link are complex and may involve inflammation, hormonal changes, and reduced lung capacity due to excess weight. Obese children with asthma may experience more frequent and severe asthma attacks, leading to impaired lung function and reduced quality of life. Obesity can contribute to obstructive sleep apnea in children, a sleep disorder characterized by interrupted breathing during sleep.

Excess weight can lead to the narrowing of the airways, causing snoring and repeated pauses in breathing during the night. Sleep apnea can result in poor sleep quality, daytime fatigue, and impaired cognitive and behavioral function in children. The excessive weight carried by obese children places additional stress on their growing bones and joints, leading to orthopedic problems. Conditions such as slipped capital femoral epiphysis (SCFE), a hip disorder, and Blount's disease, a deformity of the legs, are more prevalent in obese children and can cause pain and difficulty with mobility. NAFLD, characterized by the accumulation of fat in the liver, has become increasingly common in obese children. This condition can progress to more severe liver diseases, including non-alcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH) and cirrhosis, with potential long-term consequences for liver function and overall health children may experience low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, and social isolation due to body image concerns and societal stigma. These mental health issues can further exacerbate unhealthy eating habits, creating a detrimental cycle of emotional eating and weight gain.

CONCLUSION

Healthcare professionals can screen for obesity and related health issues during routine check-ups. They can provide guidance on healthy eating, physical activity, and weight management, as well as offer support for emotional and mental health concerns. Advocate for policies that promote healthier environments, such as limiting the marketing of unhealthy foods to children, increasing access to affordable fresh produce, and creating safe spaces for physical activity in communities. Childhood obesity poses a serious threat to the health and well-being of our younger generations. The diseases and health complications associated with obesity can have profound and lasting effects on a child's life.

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