

Obesity among the World's Youth Part 3 of 4

September 2006

☀ Canada – A Bird's Eye View

A recent survey indicates that 26.2% of Canadian children aged 2-17 are obese/overweight. This is true whether the children live in large or small urban centres, or rural areas. Childhood obesity and low levels of activity have emerged as important issues facing Canadian children. Older children, aged 10-11, are less obese at a rate of 8%, than younger children aged 2-3, who show an obesity rate of 26%.

Mark Tremblay, PhD, MD, is studying this issue and to illustrate his point has posted a 1940's picture of his father (left), and 2002 cover of MacLean's magazine (right), on-line. (See Weblinks below).



☀ France – Counterculture

France has long taken pride in its fat-oriented cuisine and animal husbandry, both perfected as an art as much as a science. A government-sponsored, calorie-cutting program has been announced, even though it may be contrary to longstanding traditions.

16% of French children are overweight, compared to 5% in 1980 – and the figure rises to 25% amongst children from deprived backgrounds.

The dominant intervention is to change eating habits, particularly among the young, by encouraging whole grain, and, fruit and vegetable consumption in all formats; reducing sugary, fatty and salty foods, and ensuring access to drinking water in public places. A growing sedentary lifestyle is to be reversed in 2007, prioritizing 30 minutes of daily exercise.

☀ England – Energy Expenditure

In England, 17% of boys and 19% of girls are obese. The figures will rise to 19% and 22% respectively, by year 2010. Finger-pointing is a major sport in this country, as stakeholders continue to hold either one, or the collective, of the food industry, advertising sector, education system and government (seemingly everyone except the consumer) accountable for these alarming rates.

A turning point in this conundrum is about to emerge as the underlying causes of the epidemic enter the discussion. The Ministry of Health now encourages Britons to “balance the calories they take in with the calories they expend, through exercise”, apparently a public-sector strategy long ago requested by the Food and Drink Federation.

☀ China – Lifestyle Changes

Although China's statistics are below those of other countries, with 15% overweight and 3% obese, an obesity control program is in place to address a 28-fold increase in overweight and 4-fold increase in obesity, among children aged 7-18, between 1985 and 2000. Identified factors include higher incomes, access to processed foods, urbanization and a sedentary lifestyle. Car ownership has soared from 6 mm in 2000, to 20 mm in 2006, replacing the use of bicycles for transport. Experts warn that China should readily act to stem the detrimental effects of obesity as heretofore observed in other countries.

☀ Some Web sites

<http://www.usask.ca/cme/articles/supersize.shtml>

<http://www.pekingduck.org/archives/001873.php>

http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story_id=5328398

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