

## **“CHILDHOOD OBESITY” - LET’S TAKE A CLOSER LOOK!**

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Some two years ago I was invited to sit on a board in Londonderry school system addressing the subject of childhood obesity and improving our children’s nutrition. As much as I appreciated the sincere efforts of the team, I finally had to quietly drop out due to what I saw was a huge misunderstanding of this perplexing topic. I want to share my thoughts with you.

In the popular view, the causes of childhood obesity – and the increase in obesity across all age groups, for that matter – include:

- Too much sedentary time on the computer and watching TV, and the flip-side:
- Not enough time spent playing/exercising and burning calories
- A diet too high in fat
- Parents who aren’t involved enough – too busy to set a good example (like jogging five miles a day?) or to monitor how much time the kids are spending on the computer or in front of the TV

To start, while I certainly didn’t have a computer when I was young, I did have a public library, and I spent a lot of my spare time reading books. Lots of books. I never found a way to enjoy reading a book that didn’t involve lying or sitting down. Lots of long hours reclining! We weren’t allowed to watch TV on school days, but we were also much less involved in organized athletic activities than most children living our western lifestyle are today.

Most parents I know are going crazy trying to keep up with their children’s sports, dance, or gymnastic schedules. Our daughter is a dancer, now 20, and while she was growing up I saw many dancers who danced many hours every week and remained overweight. There just has to be something else going on!

Allow me to offer the following ideas.

Hormones – Hormones play an amazingly important role in areas we usually do not associate with them. One of these very important areas is in the regulation of blood sugar. Follow me here. Progesterone – not a female hormone but higher in the hormonal cascade and vital to women, men, and children – controls and regulates insulin. Insulin is a hormone, and when insulin levels are up and down, blood sugar levels are up and down. When blood sugar flies too high the insulin level surges, pushing the glucose out of the bloodstream, first into the muscles and liver as stored glycogen, a liquid, then – when those storage areas are full – the glucose is converted into fat cells.

I believe most of us are progesterone deficient because we are bombarded daily with an abundance of synthetic estrogens. Progesterone opposes estrogen but is dwarfed by the estrogens found in our soft plastics, meat, dairy, and poultry supplies, herbicides, pesticides, and industrial pollution. Because glucose is the only fuel the brain can use, these cycles of high-followed-by-low blood sugar may play a role in some cases of an

inability to concentrate and focus in the classroom. Girls are reaching puberty at earlier and earlier ages, and cancer is one of our most difficult health issues.

In addition:

Low-fat nonsense – The big push in the schools in an effort to improve health is low-fat everything; low-fat milk, yogurt, cottage cheese, ice cream, etc. What could possibly be wrong with that? Everything. For starters, without the proper ratio of fat to protein, the body is not able to assimilate the protein optimally – the fat contains the fat-soluble vitamins necessary to accomplish that. From the standpoint of maintaining a healthful weight, this does influence; proper assimilation of protein is necessary for the development of lean muscle. Beyond that, there is another very big problem with low-fat foods. Fats and protein slow down the uptake of sugar from the carbohydrate in your food into the bloodstream. Time release is a good way to think of it. The amount of time it takes for skim milk to be digested and its carbohydrate (sugar) content to be taken up into the bloodstream is faster than for whole milk. It is not fat that makes us fat but sugar that makes us fat! When the insulin levels rise too fast in response to a fast increase in blood sugar, then too much of that sugar is pushed out of the bloodstream and converted into FAT!

Diet soda – Diet soda containing aspartame directly causes weight gain due to its toxicity to the liver and due to the fact that when you eat or drink something that tastes sweet and isn't, your brain makes you want to eat or drink something else that will raise your insulin level.

Replace soda in the machines with fruit juice – You may as well deliver sugar via an IV into the bloodstream if you are going to drink a glass of orange juice!

Soy – “Modern” soy, which is all unfermented soy (fermented soy foods are miso and tempeh) contains a phytate that blocks the uptake of iodine to the thyroid. Soybean flour and oil are added to just about anything you buy in a box or a bag at the grocery store. Take a look at labels next time you're shopping, and you'll see I'm right! Because of this it is estimated that westerners ingest three times the modern soy in their diets than Asians do! Add to that the health-food industry's campaign regarding the assumed benefits of using soy products as opposed to cow's, and we are being “soyed” to death! Healthy metabolism depends on a healthy function of the thyroid gland! These soy products were introduced into the food supply in part to replace the so-called “harmful” tropical oils, such as coconut oil. We now know that daily consumption of coconut oil boosts thyroid function, improves metabolism, and contributes to healthy weight loss!

Cheap grain – The livestock in this country are fed cheap grain and not allowed to graze on grass. Because of that, they are unable to generate the production of conjugated linoleic acid (CLA) that cattle are when they are grass-fed. CLA is cancer-preventive and plays a huge role in weight management because it actually shrinks fat cells!

Some ways to make a difference: Resist the “nutritional” advice of the food industry and Big Pharma – eat whole foods as they are found in nature (no low-fat stuff, yolkless eggs,

etc.). Try to use meat, poultry, and dairy products that are free of added hormones. Organic produce when possible. Prepare and eat *real* food, leave the boxes on the shelves, and limit your use of soft plastics!

Here's to your health!