

## Childhood Obesity

Obesity in children and adolescents is a serious issue in America today, causing many health and social consequences for our nation's youth.



Preventing obesity and learning more about treatment options is a key step in controlling the obesity epidemic. In situations where there are serious health, psychological or social problems, parents should seek out the best possible advice.

## Causes of Obesity

There are many factors that contribute to child and adolescent obesity.

- **Physical Activity**  
Lack of regular exercise.
- **Sedentary Behavior**  
High frequency of TV watching, computer use, video games, etc.
- **Socio-Economic Status**  
Low family incomes and non-working parents.

- **Eating Habits**  
Eating high calorie foods, eating when not hungry, eating while watching TV, eating while doing homework.
- **Environment**  
Overexposure to high-calorie foods and lack of recreational activities.
- **Genetics**  
Children whose parents are overweight or obese have a greater chance of a weight problem.

## Prevention

### Create an Active Environment:

- Participate in regular physical activities.
- Enroll your child in a structured athletics or recreation activity at school or the local park district.
- Limit TV watching.

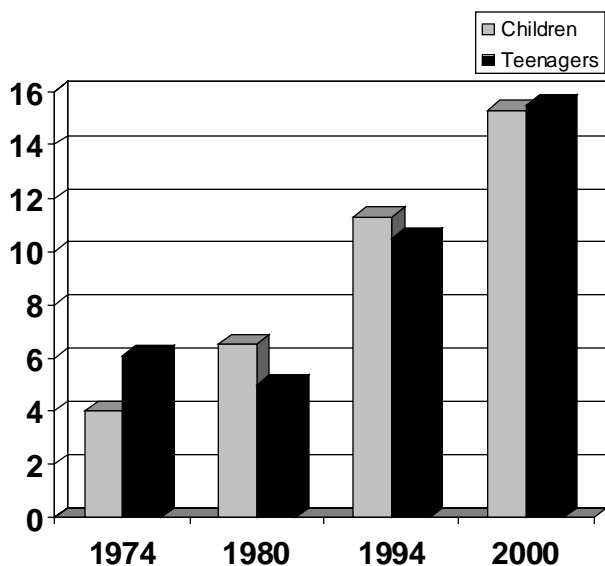
### Create a Healthy Eating Environment:

- Have the entire family practice healthy eating.
- Eat meals together at the dinner table. Avoid rushing to finish meals.
- Avoid other activities during mealtimes such as watching TV.
- Avoid foods that are high in calories, fat or sugar. Have low-fat and low-calorie snack foods available.
- Limit the frequency of fast-food eating to no more than once per week.

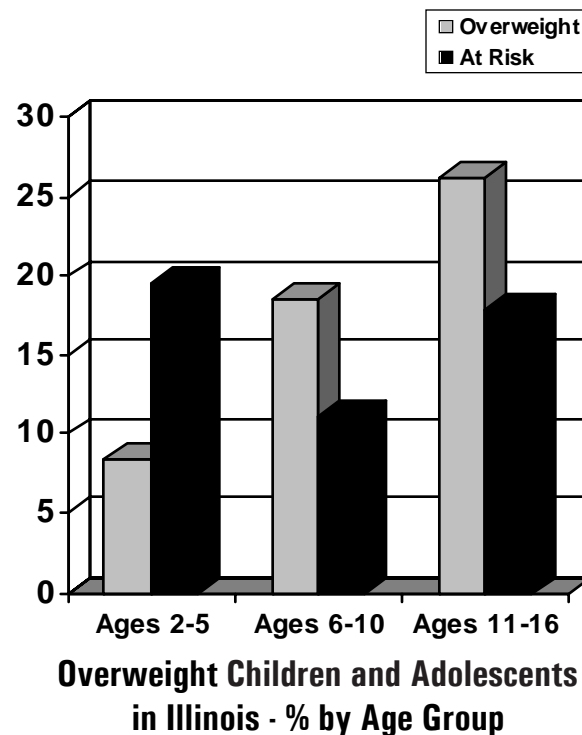


The statistics are even more staggering in Illinois. More than 25% of youth ages 12-16 and 18% of youth ages 6-10 are overweight.

### Overweight Children and Adolescents in the United States - % of Population

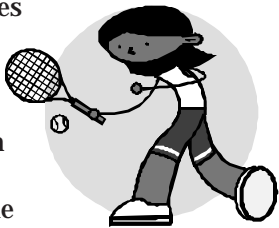


Today, approximately 15% of children and teenagers are overweight. In 1974, only 4% of children and 6% of teenagers were overweight.



## What is the Lombard Park District doing?

The Park District provides a variety of athletic and recreational programs to keep children healthy and active. From soccer and softball to tennis and basketball, the Park District encourages an active lifestyle among our youth by continuing to offer programs every season.



Over the years it has become tradition for parents to bring snacks to youth athletic events. In keeping with promoting a healthy lifestyle, the Park District routinely encourages low-fat and low-calorie choices.

“Fuel for Young Athletes,” a book by Ann Litt, MS, RD, LD, recommends:

- Sports drinks, fruit juice, water
- Trail mix with peanuts
- Applesauce and peanut butter crackers
- Yogurt and fruit
- Graham cracker with peanut butter
- Cereal bar or sports bar
- Fruit with string cheese
- Mini-bagel with turkey slices
- Smoothie made with juice/protein powder

## Additional References

### American Obesity Association

- [www.obesity.org](http://www.obesity.org)

### Food and Nutrition Information Center

- <http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/>

### Illinois State Board of Education

#### Nutrition Information

- <http://www.isbe.state.il.us/nutrition/default.htm>

## Treatment

When dealing with childhood obesity, parents should be as sensitive as possible to their child's feelings, as well as focus on the positive. More serious treatment options should be discussed with your family physician or dietitian.

### Nutrition Therapy

- Consult a dietitian for information on your growing child's nutritional needs. Their needs are different than yours!

### Behavior Therapy

- Record food intake and physical activity, including time and location. Find out why, where and when your child is eating.

### Exercise

- Youth should have 60 minutes of physical activity each day.

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