

JLC Issue Corner: *This is the third in a series of articles touching on some of the social challenges in Calgary. We'd like to give you some food for thought by showing how our JLC Healthy and Active Living initiatives fit into the bigger picture.*

Childhood Obesity and Nutrition

The Role of Nutrition in Childhood Obesity

Poor dietary practices are one of the major causes of childhood obesity in Canada. In fact, unhealthy food choices may be a far more significant factor in the development of obesity than inactivity! Thus, nutrition must be recognized as an important component in designing a program for weight reduction or control.

Obesity Effects Children

Many view childhood obesity as an illness that is as challenging as cancer, diabetes, and arthritis. The general opinion in our society is that thin is beautiful, fat is ugly, and heaviness means you are a glutton. More often than not, obese children have poor self-esteem, little social life, and rely on their parents' pocketbook to survive. According to Isadore Rosenfeld, a medical doctor, overweight children tend to earn lower grades than their slimmer peers, and their chances of finding friends are also decreased. Most children want to lose weight. However, they rarely say their motivation is to appear more beautiful or wealthy, but rather hide behind the more socially acceptable goal of improved health. They want to lose weight because it is the right thing to do.

Generation Y Children

Many people say it is normal for growing children to gain weight and doing so is seldom a threat to health. Unfortunately, the rules have changed for children of Generation Y (born after 1980). It is not all about the weight as much as it is about body composition. That is, the distribution of body fat which is largely genetically determined. Abdominal fat is worse than having excess body fat around the buttocks because it is associated with increased insulin resistance and high cholesterol that may lead to diabetes and heart disease.

Interesting Statistics

In the June 1993 issue of Consumer Reports, most people prefer Slim-Fast and Jenny Craig, and stay with those programs for about six months. During that time, they lose 10- 20lbs; however, after six months regain the weight and within two years they gain an additional 10-20lbs on top of their weight before starting the program. Today, children are following similar commercial weight-loss programs in attempt to lose weight, but fail to keep the weight off.

Health Education for Kids

If a child seriously wants to lose weight, the best way to start is to complete a nutrition assessment completed with a naturopathic doctor, medical doctor or holistic nutritionist. Various conditions including underactive thyroid gland and irritable bowel syndrome, would be screened prior to starting any nutrition program. Once the child starts a nutrition program that is appropriate for his/her size, exercises will need to be included to keep their metabolism revved up.

How can the Junior League of Calgary help our GEN Y Children

Activities below are part of our team initiative in 2010:

- *The Winter Provisional Class will host JLC's Annual Kids in the Kitchen program, where we teach children how to make healthy snacks/meals.*

Emily Roback, B.Sc., D.C.



Resources:

Rosenfeld, Isadore. Doctor, What Should I Eat?: Nutrition Prescriptions for Ailments in Which Diet Can Really Make a Difference. New York, Warner Books, Inc. 2000.

Wilmore, J and D. Costill. Physiology of Sport and Exercise: Obesity, Diabetes, and Physical Activity. Champaign, IL., Human Kinetics. 2000.

<http://www.drsears.com>