

# Practical Ways to Influence and Understand the Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Childhood Obesity

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- This webinar will last for approximately 30-45 minutes.

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## Biography

- BA in Child Development, MA in Organizational Leadership and Management
- Taught in and Directed Early Childhood Programs
- YMCA of the USA Child Care Specialist and National Trainer
- YMCA of Metro Chicago, VP of Programming, Activate America Specialist and Executive Director
- FORWARD DuPage Member/Partner, Municipality Core Leadership Teams
- Health Department and FORWARD DuPage Technical Advisor, Early Childhood and NAP SACC



# Opening Thought

**“The choices we make  
are the choices we have available to us.”**

What does this have to do with today's topic?

What does this mean given our role as:

- Parents
- Providers
- Advocates
- Educators

# Objectives

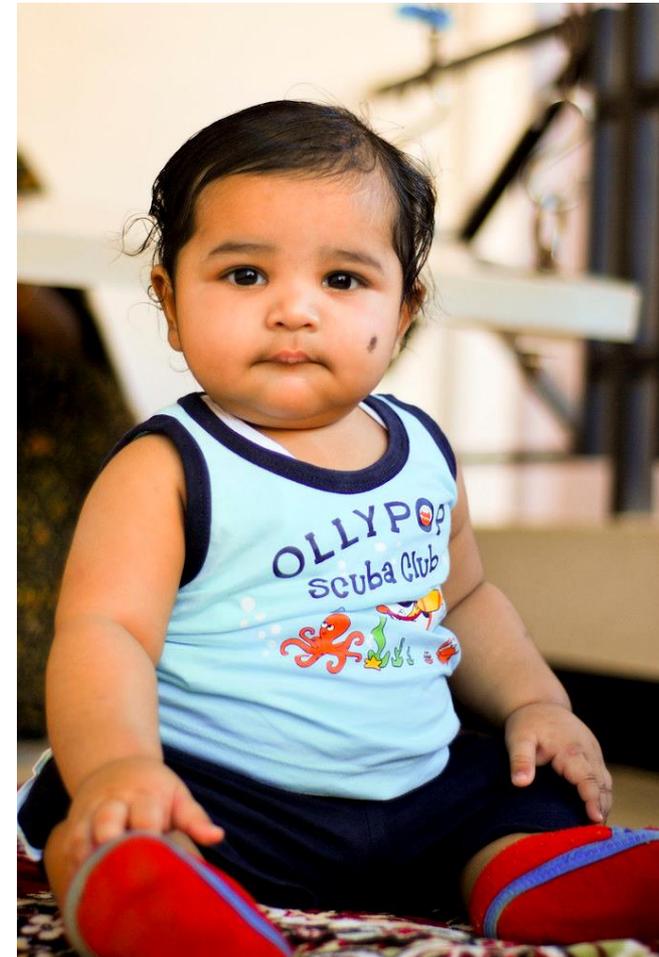
- Understand the health and economic implications of childhood obesity and the disparity among children of color.
- Identify twelve factors that have a direct impact on children's weight.
- Explore ways to mitigate the factors influencing childhood obesity among African American, Hispanic/Latino and Native American Children.

# Obesity and Overweight Does Not Effect All Children Equally

Who is most at risk among Children ages 2–19?

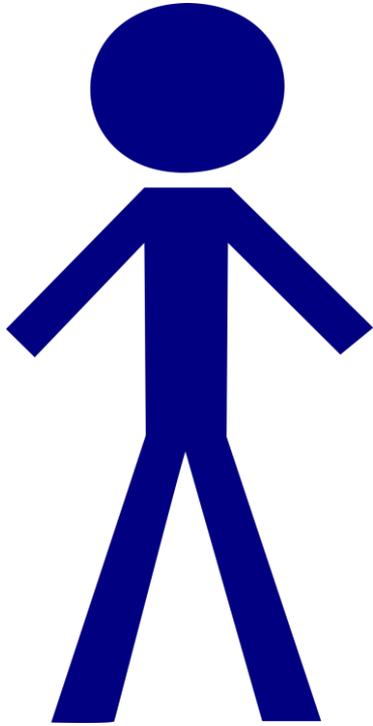
- Non-Hispanic whites: 29.5 percent of males and 29.2 percent of females
- African-Americans: 33 percent of males and 39 percent of females
- Latinos: 41.7 percent of males and 36.1 percent of females
- Low-income Latino children are at highest risk for obesity among racial-ethnic groups
- Obesity is twice as common in young American Indian/Native Alaskan children as it is in white and Asian children.

*Source AHA and Voices for Healthy Kids*



# Why the Concern?

## Children's Obesity Health Risks



- Mental Health: Bullying, Self Esteem, Depression
- High Cholesterol, High Blood Pressure – Heart Disease and Strokes
- Asthma
- Type II Diabetes
- Some Forms of Cancer: Breast, Colon, Esophagus, Liver, etc.
- Muscular Skeletal Issues: Joint pain in hips, legs, knees, feet and back
- And of course, the financial costs of obesity...lost time at work, health care, weight discrimination, etc.
- We also have to balance this with promoting a positive body image and “healthy” at any weight.

# Factors? What are the experts researching?

1. Biology, genetics and physiology
2. Mothers weight pre and during pregnancy
3. Rate of infant weight gain (role of breastfeeding) & early intervention
4. Perceptions about children's weight
5. Family culture and lifestyle
6. Early caregivers
7. Role of extended family
8. Nutritional value of typical foods
9. Level of physical activity and choices
10. Socio-Economic Status: Affordable healthy food and activity
11. Environment (proximity to fast food, food deserts, parks, safety)
12. Systemic Racism: Salary, Education, Neighborhood and Community, Incarceration, Justice, Banks, Real Estate, Stress Level



Change it?  
Can't Change?  
How Can We  
Influence?

# Systemic Racism:

A different level of access to the goods, services, and opportunities of society



- Health Care: Access and Quality
- Employment and SES: Opportunities/Salary
- Education: Access and Affordability
- Environment: Neighborhood and Community
- Justice: Policing, Court System and Incarceration Rates
- Banking: Opportunities, Home Ownership
- Housing: Home Ownership/Good Neighborhoods/Fair Price

# Biology, Genetics, Physiology



## Influencing Factors

- Different patterns of fat distribution
- Insulin secretion and response
- Lipids and lipoproteins
- Lower levels of adiponectin

## Tips and Strategies

- Be aware that there are factors beyond your control.
- Take charge of what you can control and make changes.

# Mother's Weight Pre-pregnancy and During Pregnancy

## Influencing Factors

- Children born to women with pre-pregnancy obesity are at increased risk of obesity during childhood and adult life.
- The adult obesity rates are higher in African American and Hispanic Women.
- Children with mothers who had excessive weight gain during pregnancy were 50% more likely to become obese.
- 48% of women gain more than recommended during pregnancy.

## Tips and Strategies

- Understand the relationship between mother's weight and childhood obesity.
- Understand caloric needs during pregnancy and eat a healthy diet.
- Be physically active.
- Get your body ready for pregnancy...stop smoking, get to a healthy weight.
- Follow your doctor's recommendations regarding weight gain during pregnancy.
- Resist the urge to "eat for two".



# Breastfeeding and Infant Weight Gain



## Influencing Factors

- The rates of breastfeeding duration and exclusivity are lower among black infants.
- There wasn't much difference between white infants and Hispanic infants.
- Rapid infant weight gain is strongly and consistently related to overweight and obesity later in life.
- BF babies weight gain (in the first year) is typically slower than formula-fed babies.
- Breastfeeding for <3 months provided a minor protective effect for childhood obesity, while breastfeeding for  $\geq 7$  months showed a significantly high protection.
- **Breastfeeding** can cut the chances of a **child** becoming **obese** by up to **25%**, according to a major study involving 16 countries

## Tips and Strategies

- Breastfeed exclusively for six months.
- Do not introduce solid foods until ideally six months, but not before four months.
- Make sure your infant is getting enough sleep.
- Allow for plenty of “tummy time” and movement time for an older infant. Encourage motor development.
- No juice.
- No added sugar for children under age two.

# Parent's Perceptions About Weight



## Influencing Factors

- To Hispanic parents a chubby baby is perceived to be healthy, well cared for and well provided for.
- African American parents with children overweight or at risk of overweight: 68% felt their child's weight was normal and 80% thought it was healthy.
- A “curvy” body type is more easily accepted and/or preferred.
- Parents who don't perceive their child is overweight are less likely to take action.

## Tips and Strategies

- Schedule “well baby” checks.
- Discuss with your doctor where your child falls on the “BMI” scale.
- Understand there is a link between obesity and early (and later) health consequences.
- Early intervention is critical. “Baby fat doesn't melt away with age”.

# Early Caregivers



## Influencing Factors

- Hispanic children, in informal care by grandparent were more likely to be overweight than those in formal care (e.g., child care center).
- Black children are far more likely than white or Hispanic children to have center-based care as their primary child care arrangement, but it is often rated low quality.
- Licensed child care meets minimal menu/dietary/physical activity requirements. Quality care meets additional standards.
- Healthy Habits are established early on.

## Tips and Strategies

- Ask about your ECE program's commitment to healthy living best practices.
- If you rely on family, share your expectations and healthy living strategies (food, healthy eating strategies, limited screen time, daily physical activity and plenty of sleep).
- Check in with families and providers. Ask about lunch and snack menus, eating practices, children's activity level, and screen time.

# Role of the Extended Family



## Influencing Factors

- Extended family members play in an important role in many cultures.
- Even the best- intentioned can unintentionally compromise or sabotage children's health.
- Latino mothers report following Mom's advice more so than WIC or physicians.
- Multi generation families or children raised by Grandparents...higher rates of obesity.
- Afr. Am. families – important to maintain food-based traditions even if concerned about child's weight.

## Tips and Strategies

- Focus on health not weight, for the entire family. Embrace healthy habits for all.
- Engage grandparents and other extended family members in a discussion about children's health and weight.
- Discuss the link between childhood obesity and the short and long term health implications.
- Share and monitor expectations.

# Family Culture and Lifestyle



## Influencing Factors

Culture, race and ethnicity go hand in hand and can influence:

- Perception of weight and body image.
- Belief in what constitutes a healthy child.
- Preference for certain kinds of cuisine (and what constitutes a “good hostess”) that may favor high fat and refined grains.
- Family rituals and lifestyle (sedentary lifestyle, how holidays are celebrated, social activities that are centered on food and expressing love through food).
- Values associated with food that might lead to “clean your plate”.

## Tips and Strategies

- Objectively assess your family’s culture and lifestyle to determine what behaviors and beliefs contribute to your overall health and which ones impede your health.
- Decide which behaviors and beliefs you are willing to change and which ones you are not.
- Decide which are real, imbedded in your culture or those that serve or don’t serve you well. Ask yourself, what you are willing to change for your family’s health and which ones you will keep but mitigate the risk.
- For tips to Celebrate Healthy, visit [www.forwarddupage.org](http://www.forwarddupage.org).



# Nutritional Value of Typical Foods

## Influencing Factors

- A poor diet can lead to obesity and obesity to other diseases.
- Traditional Mexican cuisine and soul food have been criticized for their high starch, fat, sodium, cholesterol, and caloric content, as well as the inexpensive and often low-quality nature of the ingredients such as salted pork and cornmeal.
- Soul food has been implicated by some in the disproportionately high rates of high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, clogged arteries, stroke, and heart attack suffered by African-Americans.

## Tips and Strategies

- Think of high fat, refined grains, added sugars and empty calories as “now and then foods” and not something your child consumes daily.
- Modify your family’s favorite soul food recipes, making substitutes that include leaner meats, healthier fats, oven-fried vs. deep fried chicken, whole grains, fruits and vegetables and low-fat dairy. Substitute in smoked turkey for fatty pork.
- Search the internet and cookbooks for “eat this: not that” or healthier recipes for favorites.



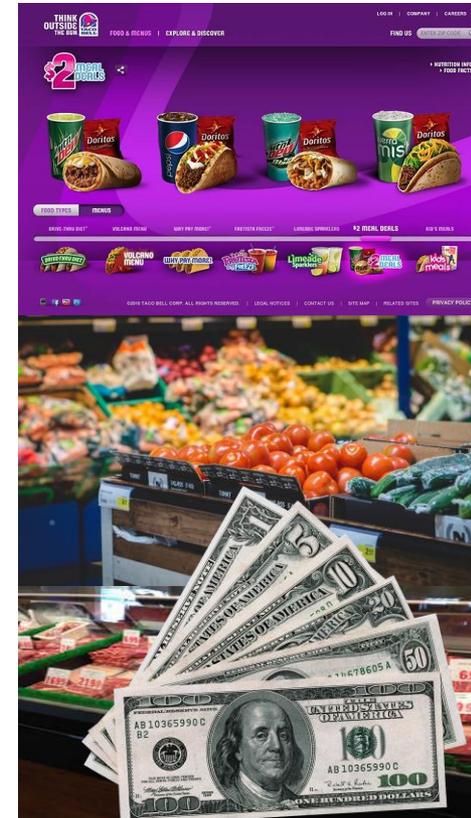
# Socio Economic Status: Affordable Food

## Influencing Factors

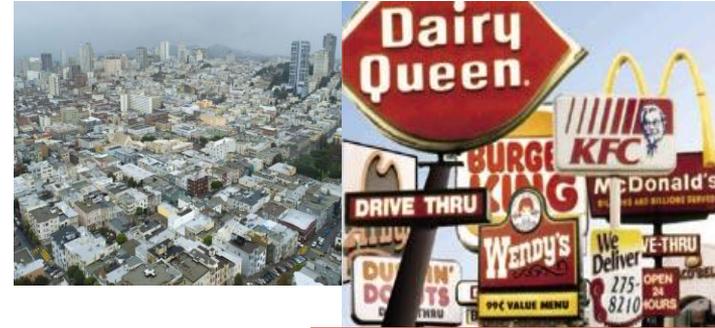
- In 2019, Blacks represented 13.2% of the total population in the United States, but 23.8% of the poverty population.
- Hispanics comprised 18.7% of the total population, but 28.1% of the population in poverty.
- Food-insecure families (often associated with race and poverty) report facing challenges purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables (high costs relative to their household budgets).
- Lack of time and resources for meal preparation also contribute to food insecurity.

## Tips and Strategies

- Address the systemic racism that keeps minorities at risk for poverty.
- Access healthier foods with WIC and SNAP.
- Use the local Food Pantry.



# Environment: Available Food & Activity Options



## Influencing Factors

- Disproportionate access to unhealthy foods (convenience stores and fast-food restaurants) in poor or minority neighborhoods may be a primary determinant of obesity disparities.
- Black and Hispanic neighborhoods have fewer large supermarkets and more small grocery stores than their white counterparts.
- Minority adolescents and those from families with lower socioeconomic status have less access to facilities for physical activity (parks, playgrounds, walking paths, etc.). When access is available, it may not be safe.

## Tips and Strategies

- Advocate for safe parks, full-service supermarkets and affordable food and activity options in your community.
- Be a voice for change in your neighborhood.
- Select local legislators and city/village council members who understand the connection between healthy environments and healthy options, healthy constituents and lower health care costs.

**FOOD DESERTS**

Food Deserts are defined as... Urban neighborhoods and rural towns without ready access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food.

Food deserts are most commonly found in communities of color and low-income areas where many people don't have cars.

Studies have found that urban residents who purchase groceries at small neighborhood stores pay between 3 and 37 percent more than suburbanites buying the same products at supermarkets.

First Lady Michelle Obama has spearheaded the "Let's Move" campaign to combat childhood obesity, which includes a goal of eradicating food deserts by 2017 with a \$400 million investment from the government focused on providing tax breaks to supermarkets that open in food deserts.

CRIME SCENE DO NOT CROSS

# Level of Physical Activity



## Influencing Factors

- Physical Activity burns calories and helps maintain a healthy weight.
- Children of color are less likely to play sports or participate in the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity per day, either in school or after school.
- Latino children are less likely to be enrolled in afterschool activities that involve physical activity because of issues like cost of programs, transportation, and language barrier.
- More than twice as many African American high school students watched television three or more hours per day than their non-Hispanic white classmates.

## Tips and Strategies

- Children need at least one hour, but ideally two or more hours of physical activity a day: structured and unstructured and some of it vigorous.
- Look for ways for the entire family to be active together: walk or bike ride, time at the local park, rake leaves or shovel snow (play in the leaves and snow), dance to music, play active games like charades and Twister, etc.
- Enroll children in early learning and afterschool programs, including enrichment programs like swimming, age-appropriate youth sports, dance, etc. Find those that are free or low cost.
- Find free or inexpensive community activities or look for financial assistance from the YMCA or park district.

# Stress and Lifestyle



## Influencing Factors

- Stress releases high levels of cortisol into the body.
- Cortisol increases your appetite (carb cravings).
- It causes insulin resistance and slows your metabolism.
- This leads the body to store fat and calories to help you cope with stress.
- Excess calories result in weight gain.

## Tips and Strategies

- Engage in daily physical activity and exercise for all.
- Get plenty of quality sleep.
- Nourish your body with healthier food choices.
- Go outdoors and enjoy nature.
- Practice deep breathing and meditation and mindfulness (even with children).
- Streamline your daily to-do list and say “no” more often. Don’t “over program kids”
- Reach out to your family, friends, a therapist and social support system.

# Intervention, Tips, Options, Choices, Solutions

## Raise Awareness

- PSA (social media and other sources)
- Internal Newsletters
- Websites
- Post or refer to Articles
- Engage Others in Conversations (children, parents, providers, schools, health care, etc.)
- Distribute FORWARD's white paper on this topic and tip sheet for families (available soon)

## Support and Coaching

- Jointly identify the barriers (with parents, providers, professionals)
- Brainstorm solutions
- Offer tips and advice
- Develop a Plan
- Check in
- Celebrate Successes

## Provide Resources

- What is a Healthy Weight? BMI charts and expectations
- Print resources/handouts/flyers
- 54321 Go!®
- Research
- Websites
- Recipes (and how to modify recipes)
- Eat this Not That
- Distribute FORWARD's white paper on this topic and tip sheet for families (available soon)

## Advocacy

- Policy Makers – Address where we fall short in policies, laws, or
- Health Care Professionals – Having those tough conversations, monitoring weight, connecting patient with resources
- City Planners – limit fast food and convenience, offer full-service grocery stores, safe and local parks and recreation options
- For All: Acknowledge the role systemic racism plays in obesity, SES and health. Make the systems, policy and environmental changes necessary to wipe out racism.

# Questions & Discussion



# Objectives

- Understand the health and economic implications of childhood obesity and the disparity among children of color.
- Identify twelve factors that have a direct impact on children's weight.
- Explore ways to mitigate the factors influencing childhood obesity among African American, Hispanic/Latino and Native American Children.

# Evaluation

Write in the chat box.

- Your big ah-ha, **or**
- One thing that you will share with the families you serve, **or**
- A goal you might set for yourself, your families or your staff

# References / Resources

All references/research is cited with a source in the final paper. Included here are the links to the research.

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# In Closing

Thank you for your participation

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