

2001 California Childhood Obesity Conference

Cultural Issues Surrounding Obesity

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Objectives

- List 5 culturally appropriate nutrition messages that impact the preventive efforts of Childhood Obesity
- Describe 5 strategies for shifting cultural barriers that impact the preventive efforts of Childhood Obesity
- List 5 standardized responsibilities across disciplines that impact the preventive efforts of Childhood Obesity

Culture: Parents and Children

- Data suggest that the initial focus of our preventive efforts should be on the obese parents of the young child, regardless of the weight status of the child.
- But, increasingly, in order to prevent adult disease, we need to focus on the child and adolescent who is overweight regardless of the weight status of their parents.

Culture: Parents and Children

- What we understand about the food, activity and family environment has changed over the years
- HHANES III data indicates that the country has become more homogenized, suggesting that whatever factors are affecting childhood obesity are now operating countrywide, rather than locally or regionally.

Culture: Parents and Children

- The major variables within the environment are within the family.
- We know that obesity is more prevalent among African Americans, Mexican Americans and Native Americans.
- Socioeconomic class operates quite distinctively among these various groups.

Culture: Parents and Children

- Years ago there was a direct relationship between socioeconomic class and obesity. The wealthier your parents were, the more likely you were to be overweight.
- That, too has changed. Now the relationship is inverse, but only among Caucasians.

Culture: Parents and Children

- Family size is inversely related to childhood obesity. Children in large families have a lower prevalence of obesity than children in smaller families.
- Dietary Intake Changes:
 - Fat intake
 - Eating pattern
 - Food preparation
 - Take out food

Cultural influences on feeding beliefs of mothers

- Among ethnic groups, culturally based feeding beliefs influence how individual mothers make decisions
- Strongly held feeding beliefs have created resistance to nationally and internationally established recommendations of infant feeding practices

Culturally appropriate nutrition messages

- Type of food - Non Fat Milk
- Beans - Preparation
- Sodas - Frequency and amounts
- Meal Pattern
- Food and Portion sizes
- Role Model - Eating out

Cultural strategies to influence feeding beliefs

- Working with mothers at their different patterns of immigration
- Identifying at what stage of assimilative process the mother is at the time of assessment
- Determine the feeding beliefs status of the mother and father

Cultural strategies to influence feeding beliefs

- Acknowledging the cultural basis behind feeding beliefs
- Examining feeding beliefs within the context of the present host culture
- Offering cultural appropriate solutions to improve feeding practices

Health care providers' responsibilities across disciplines

- Same message
- Update information
- Know your resources
- Refer the obese child - Who is responsible?
- Follow-up

Conclusion

- There are a number of factors that we believe contribute to the incidence of obesity, including ethnicity and environment
- Effective nutrition education and emphasis on physical activity are modifiable factors

Conclusion

- The answers to the epidemic of obesity are not mysterious
- The problem lies in our collective willingness to translate what we know into what we do

Conclusion

- Key messages
 - Promote use of non-fat milk
 - Limit intake of sodas and juice
 - Limit fast foods
 - Promote fruits and vegetables
 - Give messages of self-acceptance to improve self-esteem
 - Promote activity

Reference

- Childhood Obesity: Causes & Prevention. Symposium Proceedings. 1998. Shirley Watkins Closing Remarks - Secretary for Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services.