

---

## Child Obesity In Oklahoma

On September 18, 2018, an article in Metro News written by Tanveer Mann was published about a child whose name is unknown for privacy reasons who died from a heart disease caused by obesity. The child was only 13 years old and had a body index that was 42, being only 13 years of age his body index was twice his recommended weight. The child also had an enlarged liver caused by obesity that was going to lead to liver failure. Could this happen in Oklahoma next? Is child obesity still a problem or do parents not care what they're feeding their children anymore? According to The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, statistics say that Oklahoma is number six in the United States for child obesity. Child obesity is a huge problem especially for low-income families who cannot afford healthy food. It seems that child obesity is just something put on the back burner that no one pays attention to anymore. However, Oklahomans need to refocus energy on the issue of childhood obesity and the problems that come with it.

Child obesity is a child that is overweight for his/her height, weight, and age. It mainly affects children from the ages of five to eighteen. There are many ways to help an obese child but it will consist of the child and his/her guardians working hard at eliminating potential items that could cause more weight gain. If a child consumes high sugars or takes in more than the body can consume, the body then stores the extra fat which can cause the body to become obese. Imagine a water balloon being filled with water; a water balloon can only hold a certain amount of water, and if the balloon becomes too big then it will burst. The balloon represents the body, the water represents unhealthy food and high sugars the burst of the water balloon represents the health problem or death.

According to Ashley Weedn, an Oklahoma health scientist low-income children who are in preschool that are African American and Hispanics are at a high rate of obesity. The reason why African Americans and Hispanics are at the high is that those races are the ones with low-income families. Low-income families are buying cheap junk food to get by every day instead of buying healthy food. It's not because they don't want to buy healthy food, it's because junk food is cheaper than healthy food. Fast food restaurants are also cheaper than healthy food from grocery stores. With healthy food being more expensive it's making low-income families turn to the fast-food restaurants and the cheap junk foods at the stores.

When a child becomes obese from fast food and junk food, the child's lifestyle is typically impacted. As the child becomes more obese they become less active and very anti-social. The child becomes anti-social because he/she is self-conscious about how they look. They tend to stay inside and use technology for a social vent. They don't like the way people see them in real life but on a video game, they do not have to worry about anything. A child that stays inside all the time will be less active according to the United States Department of Agriculture ("Physical Activity"). A child needs sixty minutes or more of physical activity each day. Without physical activity, the child will become lazier.

As a child becomes overweight from all the high sugars and unhealthy food, more and more problems will start to occur inside and outside the body. On the outside of the body the stomach, arms, and legs will become more bloated. The hands and feet will look like they're

---

swollen. The effects of obesity on the inside of the body could lead to any health issue. According to Dr. Anna Burson, a specialist in family medicine the first sign she usually sees in children who are becoming obese is diabetes. She says “Diabetes is one of the early problems of obesity and can usually be treated by a healthy diet, light exercise, and over-the-counter medicine.” Although diabetes is one of the first problems, other ones that come after are not as easily treatable as diabetes. Other health problems could be heart diseases, asthma, cancer, and kidney disease. Having any of these problems could lead to death or becoming hospitalized. Although obesity affects inside and outside of the body, it also could cause mental health problems like depression, anxiety, and sleep apnea. Out of those issues, depression is usually the first to happen. Depression is usually caused by bullying and low self-esteem. Each of these problems can be treated with medications and counseling.

The best way to try and lower obesity rates are to adopt another countries life style. Although obesity is a great problem in every country, Japan comes in with the lowest child obesity rate out of all the countries. According to authors Benjamin Senauer, and Gemma Masahiko, a specialist in consumer economics, Japan has the lowest child obesity rate because more children and adults walk everywhere due to the high prices from vehicles and all the complications it comes with like gas and oil. Also, another reason would be that Japanese citizens consume 200 fewer calories than United States citizens (Senauer). Japan's lifestyle could lower our obesity rates and could save many lives. The only thing the Japanese citizens are doing is walking more and eating less. Oklahoma could easily make this happen by extending schools recess times as well as adding a healthy lifestyle class to schools.

Even though adapting Japan's lifestyle could help stop obesity, it could anger Oklahoma citizens. If Oklahoma adopted Japan's lifestyle that means gas prices would have to increase. To be honest the Oklahoman people are somewhat used to higher gas prices anyway. Gas prices have gone up before and the Oklahoman people did what they do best and adapted to it. Some obstacles from having a healthy lifestyle class would be that Oklahoma would have to provide more money to schools. Oklahoma barely gives money to schools right now, so that would be a major obstacle from having a class added. Obstacles for having to extend recess time would be that either schools would have to go extend the time they release school or schools would have to take some time away from other classes.

While child obesity is a big problem in Oklahoma there is still hope that one day we can find a better way to deal with children becoming obese. If more people would share stories like the 13-year-old boy's story, then maybe people will think twice about what they eat and what they do in their free time. If Oklahoman people would change their everyday lifestyles then Oklahoma citizens could lower the childhood obesity rate. Overall, child obesity is a huge problem in every country. In some countries, they have lower child obesity rates, but that' is because everything is more expensive. Maybe more physical activity is needed or maybe food prices need to be more expensive especially junk food. A way Oklahoma citizens could help stop obesity is to make sure you educate yourselves and others about obesity.