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## The Link Between Childhood Obesity And Poverty

Obesity is a prevalent problem in America, but when it is brought up hardly anyone thinks about the link that it shares with income. It is easy to think about how everyone makes their own food choices, rarely do others see that it is not always possible for everyone to do this and for everyone to have the luxury of splurging on a healthier meal. There are other factors that play into this concept such as the fact that some lower-income neighborhoods do not have fresh markets, nor do they have the best quality of groceries. The areas that these children live in may not be safe for them to run around outside and it is possible for these lower-income areas to not have the funding they need for recreational areas. Statistics show a strong correlation between childhood obesity and poverty.

The most obvious of all of these reasons is the fact that families who live in poverty do not necessarily have the luxury of being able to spend more money on a healthier meal when cheap, carb-filled options are available to them. It is also likely that parents who make low incomes go to work more frequently and their children do not have the privilege of having a parent to cook them a nice meal for dinner. Children in these situations often result in eating junk food, microwavable meals, or food high in sugars. Another reason for the link to obesity from poverty is something as common as stress eating according to a scholar on this topic, "Economic insecurity- leads to stress, and people often cope by eating high-fat, sugary foods." (Lee, Hedwig). According to the American Diabetes Association, "43% of households with incomes below the poverty line (\$21,756) are food insecure" (Levine par. 5).

Being able to afford better food options is not the only problem that low-income families face. In some neighborhoods, those options are not even available. Another thing that is not, often, available in impoverished neighborhoods is recreational centers for children to run around in and be active in. This can be due to low funding. In a lot of the articles I read it said that a large portion of the inactivity is because gym memberships are expensive, workout clothes are expensive, and so is equipment. Some people would argue that all of those things are not necessary and that kids should go outside and run around. What those people do not realize is that the neighborhoods that these children grow up in are often unsafe and have violence all around, so they can not go outside and run around with their friends.

To show this link scientists did an experiment in Massachusetts that incorporated statistics to prove the correlation. The experiment took place in 2009 and it was on 111,799 students in Massachusetts ranging from different grade levels. After they performed their study and did the math, they conclude that low-income and obesity have a stronger correlation than ethnicity and obesity, which is what they originally thought. In the Scientific Journal that the scientist posted, they said, "For every 1% increase in low-income, there was a 1.17% increase in overweight/obese status."

Now that scientists have been able to prove the correlation they are now able to suggest things like supporting good health, physical health, and mental health. There are some people proposing ways that this can be made into a reality. Hedwig Lee wrote an article on this subject and she suggested that "Investing in a diverse set of physical activities and nutritional programs in neighborhoods and educational institutions may be the best way to reduce the risk

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of obesity among poor youngsters.” Lee then went on to say that in order for these things to happen funding would be needed to carry out the programs. This could be possible if more people were to know about this.

Although this may not be something that people think about often, it is interesting to see this correlation and how poverty really does affect obesity. Most of society probably thinks that people who live in poverty suffer mostly from being underweight and malnutrition, but that could not be further from the truth. As soon as more people know about this topic and take an interest in it there could possibly be a way to break the link in the near future. This could also help start a decline in the obesity crisis that America is currently facing.