

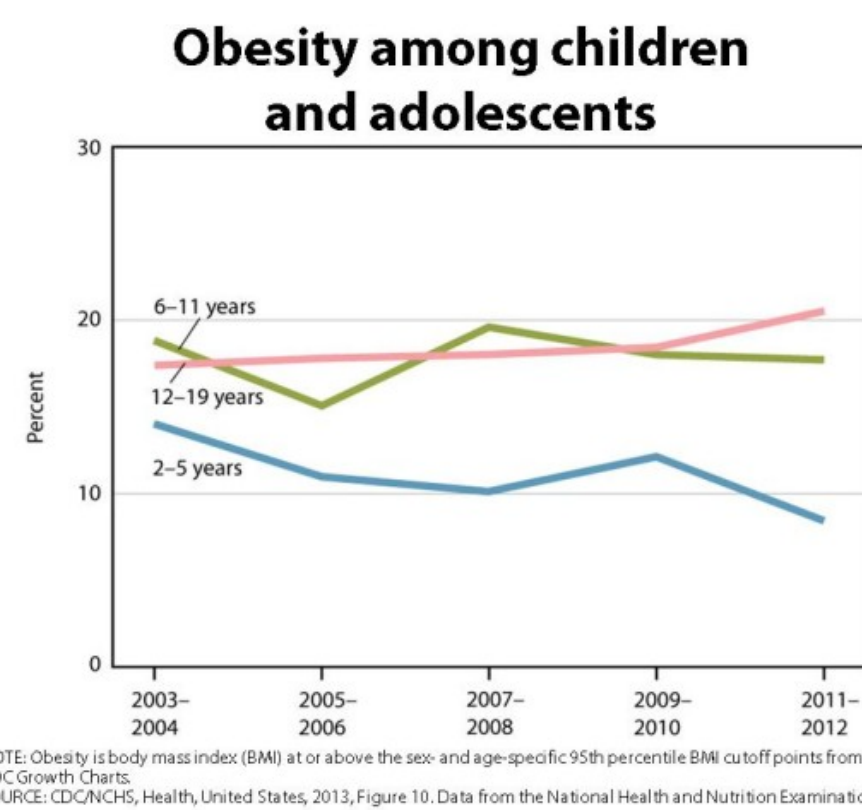
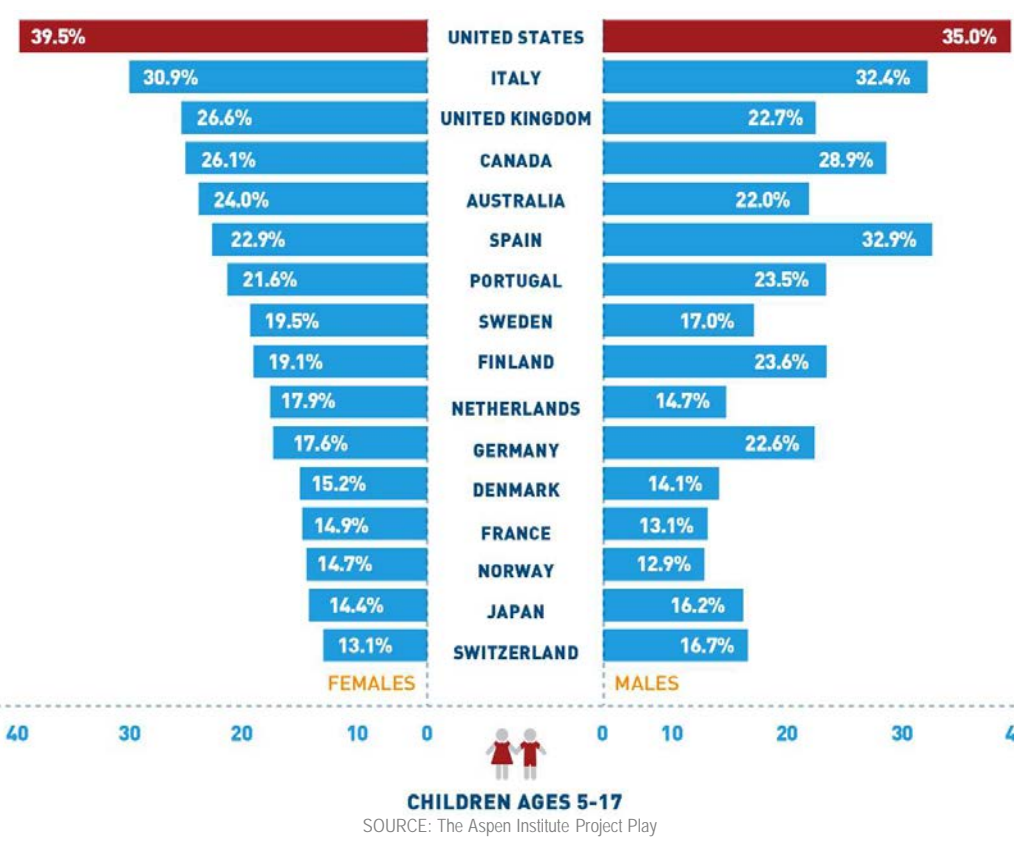
Obesity and Adolescent Girls' Sexual Behaviors: Understanding the Influence of Peer and Romantic Relationships

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Childhood Obesity is a U.S. Epidemic

25,000,000 Children in the United States are Overweight or Obese

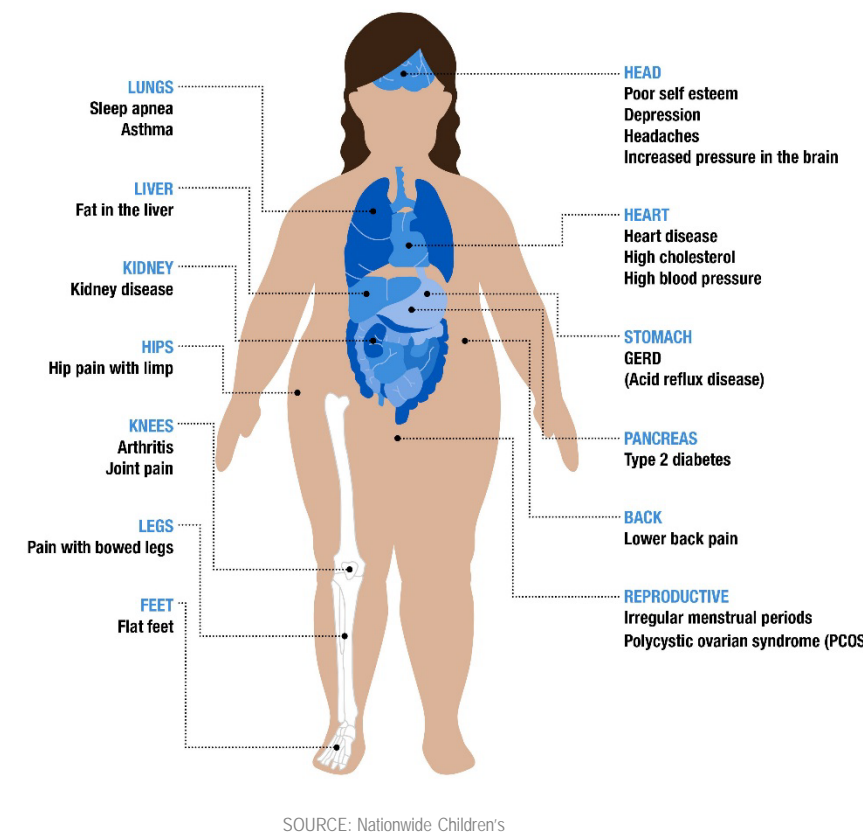
That's equal to **1 of every 3 kids!**



Effects of Childhood Obesity

On Physical Health

Complications of Childhood Obesity



On Social Lives

Obese children bullied at school

Less likely to be endorsed as a friend by peers

Less likely to be called popular or cool

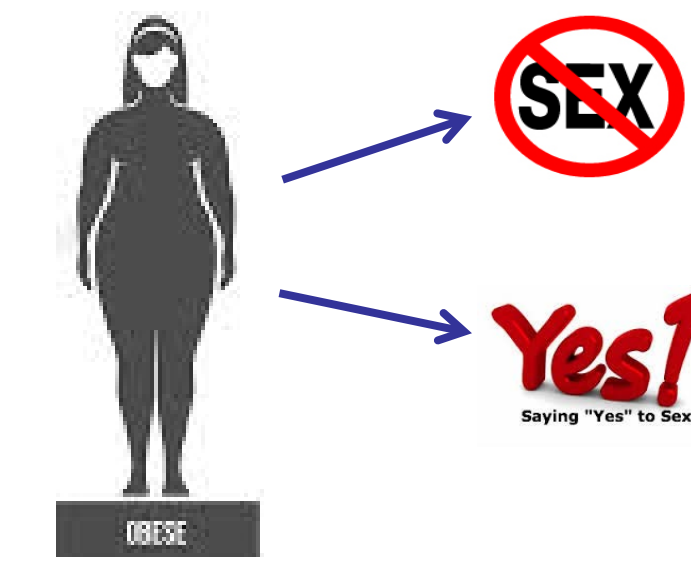
Have more trouble making new friends

Obesity and Teen Sexual Behavior

Teens engage in more risky sexual behaviors than adults

Obese teens engage in more risky sexual behaviors than non-obese teens

Obese girls are more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviors than obese boys



Obese girls more likely to delay sexual initiation

- Among sexually active girls, obese girls are more likely to:
- Start having sex earlier
 - Have more casual sexual partners
 - Have more partners
 - Have older sexual partners
 - Report using alcohol the last time they had sex
 - Use condoms less

What has our preliminary research taught us about the lives of obese girls?

Importance of cultural norms about beauty

- For sexually-active girls, believing you are overweight (NOT actually being overweight) is associated with early sexual initiation and less condom use
 - **Whites:** overweight misperceptions associated with less condom use
 - **Hispanics:** overweight perceptions associated with alcohol use at recent sexual intercourse
 - **Blacks:** overweight perceptions associated with more sexual partners

How you define risky sex matters

- *Being* overweight is associated with engaging in less risky patterns of sexual behavior
- *Believing* that you are overweight is associated with engaging in higher risk patterns

Age at sexual initiation matters

- **Early Starters:** obese girls more likely to engage in sexual risk behaviors
- **Normal Starters:** no differences in sexual risk taking

Why did we get funding from NIH?

Our Theory

- Obese teens have fewer chances to develop social skills and supportive social relationships, which negatively affects their romantic relationships.

Our Questions

- Are peer and romantic relationship skills delayed in obese girls?
- Are romantic relationships different for obese girls?
- Do adolescent peer and romantic relationship skills predict relationship experiences in adulthood?

What We've Learned

- Women in their 20's to 30's are equally satisfied in their romantic relationships except...
- Women obese since childhood are 2.9 times less satisfied in their romantic relationships.

Is this about why "fat girls can't get dates?"

- This is really about:
 - The health of America's children
 - Understanding the long lasting effects of obesity on children's mental and social health
 - Understanding how our culture's stigmatization of obesity harms our children
 - Understanding a public health problem among an often neglected, but growing population of America's children

What do we do about this problem?

Link between obesity and sexual behaviors = Tip of the iceberg!

Media stigmatization of obese children

Food policies that are obesogenic

Mass media marketing of obesogenic food to kids

Urban planning policies that limit physical activity

Sex education programs that promote abstinence only



Stop promoting unrealistic and unhealthy beauty norms.

Celebrate the beauty of real women's bodies.

Ensure adolescent access to comprehensive sex education & highly effective contraception.

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