

Parents should be more objective about kids weight

By ACSH Staff — June 16, 2015



A recent [study](#) [1] of nearly 8,000 American youngsters found

that when they entered kindergarten, over 27 percent of them were either overweight or frankly obese. And this percentage increased as the kids aged. To investigate the causes of such perturbing statistics, Dr. DT Duncan and colleagues from the New York University School of Medicine, [examined](#) [2] the accuracy of parents assessments of their young children s body weights.

An astonishing 86 percent of parents of 2 to 5 year olds did not assess their overweight/obese children accurately in a national survey in 2012. This was worse than the results of a similar survey in 1988-94.

There are many reasons parents can be so blind to the truth. Dr. David Katz, Director of Yale s Prevention Research Center [suggested](#) [3] (in an article in the *New York Times*) one of them blind, willful denial. Other experts cited in the article were less harsh.

For example, Dr. Francine R. Kaufman of the Keck School of Medicine at the University of Southern California explained that healthy foods can be more expensive, and thus income levels can have a substantial impact on a family s food choices. Further, she noted that immigrants from countries with inadequate food supplies often see excess body fat as an indicator of health, rather than as a threat to health.

Further, if other members of the family are also overweight or obese, it may seem too complicated to deal with the issue of weight control for a child. The parents may also feel defensive about their ability to properly feed the child. Also, since children all over the developed world are heavier than they used to be, parents may see this as the new normal.

ACSH s Dr. Ruth Kava commented, It s obvious that countering childhood overweight and obesity is a very complicated task. But willful blindness, or sticking your head in the sand, is not going to help the at-risk child. The key is to discover why some parents are inaccurate in their assessments and to educate them about the problems that may lie ahead for example early diabetes and heart problems. It may also be useful to tailor educational efforts for different immigrant/ethnic groups and socioeconomic groups.

Source URL: <https://www.acsh.org/news/2015/06/16/parents-should-be-more-objective-about-kids-weight>

Links

[1] <http://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa1309753>

[2] <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25928301>

[3] http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/16/health/parents-denial-fuels-childhood-obesity-epidemic.html?_r=0