



“Cradle to Table Nutrition for Early Years Learning”

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Childhood Diabetes

Soaring levels of obesity in children have sparked a worrying rise in the number of children developing Type 2 diabetes, a condition which traditionally has affected overweight adults.

Overweight people are 80 times more likely to develop Type 2 diabetes than those who maintain a healthy weight. Up to 85% of children with Type 2 diabetes are either overweight or obese at diagnosis.

A recent survey in England found that 18% of school children were overweight and a further 6% were obese; this equates to 1.8 million overweight and 700,000 obese children in the UK.

The number of cases of Type 2 diabetes in children has increased 10 fold in the past 5 years. Children as young as nine are being diagnosed with the condition. An estimated 1500 children are thought to be suffering from the condition but this, some experts believe, is just the tip of the iceberg.

In Type 2 diabetes, not enough insulin is produced, or the insulin that is made is unable to work properly. Insulin helps to keep our blood sugar levels under control by allowing body cells to use glucose from the food we eat to make energy.

Type 2 diabetes is a progressive, lifelong condition that, if poorly controlled, can lead to serious complications including heart disease, other circulatory problems, kidney damage and blindness.

People who are heavier have more difficulty in controlling their diabetes. And those who develop Type 2 diabetes as children will be at higher risk of complications than adults who develop it in middle age.

Prevention and avoidance of Type 2 diabetes is the best option. Being overweight or obese isn't just about carrying around a few extra pounds, it does pose serious consequences for your health no matter how old you are.

Effective prevention:

- Help your child to keep their weight at the right level for their height. The 'centile charts' can be found in your child's health record book and your GP or health visitor can explain what these mean.
- This can be achieved by a combination of a healthy, balanced diet and being more active.
- Encourage your child to engage in physical activity for one hour every day.
- Involve the whole family in changes to eating and physical activity – you can all benefit (it is unfair to expect one member of the family to make changes on their own).

If you are concerned about your child's risk of developing diabetes talk to your GP, health visitor or school nurse for further advice and support.