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Changing Parental Behavior May Help Obese Kids Lose Weight

Young children of parents who took classes in nutrition, exercise kept weight off for 2 years

This article appeared on the U.S. News & World Report and Bloomberg Businessweek websites.

By Jenifer Goodwin
HealthDay Reporter

TUESDAY, Jan. 25 (HealthDay News) -- It's hard to help overweight children lose weight, and keeping it off over the long-term is even tougher. But obese children whose parents took classes on the importance of healthy eating and exercise lost weight and kept it off for the next two years, according to a new Australian study.

Researchers said the study shows that targeting parents -- rather than the children -- can help stave off weight gain in children aged 5 to 9.

"We believe it makes developmental sense to involve only parents," said lead study author Anthea Magarey, a senior research associate of nutrition and dietetics, at Flinders University School of Medicine in Adelaide, Australia, where the study took place. "It takes the stigma away from the child and supports a whole family approach."

The study findings were released online in advance of publication in the February issue of Pediatrics.

For young children, parents play a huge role in their eating and exercise habits, Magarey explained. The kids are still spending most of their time at home and eating most meals at home. Parents buy and prepare food, and decide what and how much kids can eat. They are responsible for providing opportunities for children to be active and can set rules for TV and video game use.
The researchers enrolled mostly mothers of 169 moderately obese or overweight children aged 5 to 9 years in a six-month "healthy lifestyle" course, in which parents were taught about portion size and reading nutrition labels, being a good role model for their children and setting limits. (Half of the parents also took a parenting course, although the study authors found little difference between the two groups).

At the end of six months, children's body mass index (a measurement that takes into account weight and height) dropped an average of 10 percent, as did their waist circumference. Eighteen months later, the children had kept the weight off, the investigators found.

In the United States, about 17 percent of children and adolescents aged 2 to 19 years are obese, a number that has been increasing since the 1970s, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

About 24 percent of U.S. children aged 2 to 5 are overweight, meaning they have a BMI in the 85th percentile or above for their height and age. That number rises to 33 percent among children aged 6 to 11, according to the CDC.

After the healthy lifestyle sessions, parents said they felt more comfortable saying "no" to their children's demands, setting limits on the type of food the children could eat, limiting the amount of time they spent watching TV or playing video games, and establishing consequences for breaking the rules.

Parents assessed their own current eating patterns and set their own goals for change, such as limiting TV to no more than two hours a day, doing more active family activities and making small dietary changes that can go a long way, such as eating more fruit and vegetables, using reduced-fat dairy products and drinking fewer sweetened beverages such as sodas.

Kathy Kolasa, a professor of nutrition services and patient education at East Carolina University in Greenville, N.C., said she does not believe children have to be excluded from obesity prevention programs because of the risk of stigmatizing them.

But making sure parents know about nutrition, portion size and how to make sure their children are getting enough physical activity is critical.
"In my experience, there are plenty of parents who tell me they know what to feed their kids and that they are eating healthy," Kolasa said. "When we analyze their diet, they are surprised that they are not following or providing age-appropriate portions and healthy foods for their kids."

As for the parents included in the study, their weight did not change over the two years.

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Obituary

Anne E. Kellogg

Anne Elizabeth Kellogg, 57, died at noon on Sunday, Jan. 23, 2011. Born in St. Louis, Mo., Aug. 11, 1953, she was the daughter of Byrne and Eileen Kellogg.

Anne received her B.S. Degree in Chemistry and Community Health from Western Kentucky University and her M.D. from the University of Louisville. She was a Physician and Researcher in the Pathology Department at East Carolina University School of Medicine from 1993 until her death. During her life she invented and patented a number of antibodies, some of which are being tested in a novel approach to fighting various forms of cancers. Her love for research was based in her desire to find a way to help people who are experiencing the trauma of cancer. Anne also had a deep love for animals - her own (horses, dogs, and cats) and any others. In the aftermath of Hurricane Floyd, she joined others and rescued animals that had been stranded by the floodwaters. She went so far as to house a 300 pound pet pig in her yard at her house on the golf course in Brook Valley until a suitable home could be found.

Anne's love for animals was only eclipsed by her love of family. She was preceded in death by her father, Byrne Kellogg; and her brother, John.

She is survived by her mother, Eileen of LaGrange, Ky.; two brothers, Mike Kellogg of St. Cloud, Fla. and Patrick Kellogg and wife, Jan, of Crestwood, Ky.; three sisters, Mary Kellogg Rupp of Fremont, Calif., Therese Kellogg of Smithfield, Ky., and Margaret Kellogg Simpson and husband, Larry, of LaGrange, Ky. Anne is also survived by her partner, Larry Simonds.

The family would like to express their most sincere thanks to Dr. Darla Liles and to the nurses in the Palliative Care Unit at Pitt County Memorial Hospital for their love, caring, and openness to Anne during her battle with Lung Cancer.

There will be no funeral or memorial services per her wishes. Those desiring to make memorials, please consider the Pitt County Humane Society.

Published in The Daily Reflector on January 26, 2011
RALEIGH — North Carolina lawmakers will consider slashing the ranks of university professors and raising college tuition during the General Assembly session that begins today, overshadowed by a budget crisis that could eliminate some degree programs.

Republicans taking charge of the state’s budget for the first time since 1898 are promising deep cuts to close a projected $3.7 billion gap. And the $2.7 billion total the state budgeted last year to run the University of North Carolina’s 16 campuses isn’t off limits, said expected Senate leader Phil Berger, R-Rockingham.

“For anyone to suggest that any part of the state budget is going to be immune from consideration for reductions, they’re not looking at the situation in a realistic fashion,” Berger said this week.

Some $620 million in state funds were cut in the past four years and mostly took a toll on administration, so further trims will be felt by students, said Jeff Davies, the UNC system’s top operating officer.

“We are seeing more pain on the academic side of the house,” Davies said Tuesday, adding that legislators have a tremendous task ahead to balance the state budget now at $19 billion.
"For anyone to suggest that any part of the state budget is going to be immune from consideration for reductions, they're not looking at the situation in a realistic fashion."

Phil Berger
R-Rockingham

"This is the most difficult economy in my lifetime."

Deciding where layoffs among the university system's 47,000 workers statewide fall will be determined in the months ahead, Berger said. Even the $64 million expected from not-yet-finalized tuition increases of up to 6.5 percent for the next academic year is not safe: The money could be taken to pay for other programs.

Universities have projected that a 10 percent budget cut would mean eliminating 2,000 positions, half of them faculty members, along with 6,400 fewer course sections. Campus library hours, tutoring and advising also likely would be reduced. The UNC School of the Arts would have to examine closing its film school.

The departing UNC system president, Erskine Bowles, even commented that it might be smarter to close an entire campus than chip away at every uni-

See BUDGET, B3
The review is expected to take time because the campuses offer hundreds of programs. For example, a dozen UNC campuses in addition to the School of the Arts offer 22 bachelor’s degree programs in music performance, music industry studies, music business, musical theater and music technology.

The drive to get leaner was forced on industries years ago, and the state's public universities may benefit from the process, said Sanjeev Deshmukh of Greensboro, a parent with two children attending the schools.

"Maybe removing some money from it may be better for education," said Deshmukh, whose son is an Appalachian State University sophomore and daughter is a senior at UNC-Chapel Hill. "Hopefully we'll come out of it with the right solution. Change is always painful."

Even with likely tuition increases, North Carolina universities are a bargain, Deshmukh said. Appalachian State's undergraduate tuition and fees are $5,174 this year. UNC-Chapel Hill is charging $6,488.

Tuition and fees are expected to continue rising in the coming years, Davies and others said.

But a 6.5 percent limit on tuition increases mean students likely won't make up for state spending cuts. In previous recessions in the early 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, undergraduate resident tuition jumped by 20 percent or more in the worst year.

"I see the economy continuing to remain challenging for the next couple, three, years," Davies said.

The likelihood of tuition increases worries Tarini Parti, a UNC-Chapel Hill junior majoring in journalism and political science.

"If tuition goes up, it's going to be hard to pay for school for students like me who depend on grants for financial aid," said Parti, 20, of Wilson, who is also an editor at the campus newspaper. "The (legislative) session is obviously going to be really important for the university system."

Gary D. Robertson contributed to this report.
Wilmington resident Zion Kinlaw, age 10, was about to check into the hospital in Chapel Hill to have brain surgery on Oct. 5. As a huge fan of the Tar Heels, he and his mother, Jennifer Kinlaw, decided to drop by the baseball complex at Boshamer Stadium while they were in town.

The visit resulted in a chance meeting with Tar Heels assistant coach Scott Jackson, a former coach at UNC-Wilmington. And that chance meeting turned into an inspirational trek for Zion and the UNC coaches and players, one of whom is a cancer survivor.

Zion is a catcher in the Myrtle Grove Optimist Little League program. He feared that after surgery to remove a non-cancerous brain cyst, he might have to give up baseball.

But after the procedure, he was sitting in his hospital bed in the UNC Pediatric Neurosurgical Department with more concern for the 6.5-inch scar on his head.
Soon, his spirits were lifted by a rather large group of Tar Heels who came for a visit.

"It felt really good because they all wanted to see me, just because I had brain surgery," Zion said. Head coach Mike Fox had announced to the team that he was going to visit Zion in the hospital and the players decided to come along.

Among the players was bullpen catcher Chase Jones, who years earlier, as an 18-year-old freshman at UNC, had his baseball career suspended by surgery to remove a malignant brain tumor, but only temporarily.

"It made me feel comforted," Zion said of meeting Jones. "I was really scared about my scar. But whenever I met the baseball team, I was excited."

"(Chase) took my hand and I could feel his scar," Zion said. The scar was hidden under Jones' hair. "I didn't know if it would heal back or just be huge. That told me it would heal back and it would just look normal again."

Jones said when he first met the young fourth-grader, he took him aside. "I basically told him, ‘Once you beat this, you are basically one up on the rest of the world.’" said Jones, who endured six months of chemo and radiation but is fully recovered now.

Coach Jackson talked about the way the players embraced the 10-year-old. "That means a lot to us, as coaches, that our guys are obviously looking at the big picture," Jackson said. "Zion and his situation, it quickly, quickly puts things in perspective for us."

Tears welled up in his mother's eyes when she spoke about the relationship between her son and the team.

"It was just overwhelming for us as parents," Kinlaw said. "They really embraced him and took interest in who he was and what he was about, and was he OK and is he going to be OK."

Zion will return to the baseball field this spring.
His family has founded Blue on the Brain, a fund to benefit UNC Pediatric Neurosurgery. Donations are being accepted and blue wrist bands are being sold for $5 each.

For more information about Blue on the Brain or to order bracelets, send an e-mail to gkinlaw1@ec.rr.com. If a business orders several, the family will deliver them.

On March 26, Zion will be catching the first pitch, thrown by Jones, before the Duke-UNC game at Boshamer Stadium.

For much more on this story, go to YouthRec.blogs.StarNewsOnline.com.
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President Obama wants to be sure that the United States keeps making the investments that help the economy grow. Congressional Republicans want the government to stop wasting so much money.

Education — particularly higher education — offers a great opportunity for a compromise that would let both sides claim victory and, even more important, help the economy.

Why? Education is the single best investment a society can make. High school became universal in the United States in the early 20th century, when other countries viewed universal schooling as wasteful, which goes a long way toward explaining our economy’s 20th-century success. Likewise, the slowing increase in the number of new college graduates in the 1980s and ’90s helped contribute to the slow economic growth of the last decade. So protecting higher education from across-the-board budget cuts, as Mr. Obama is urging, makes sense.

But the status quo is not worth protecting. Both the federal government and the states spend money on higher education in terribly wasteful ways. They don’t offer incentives for success, and they demand little accountability from colleges. Colleges that do a masterful job of graduating students receive no reward, and those that do a subpar job — of which there are many — go unpunished, giving them little reason to improve.

“Colleges are very much like high schools,” as Arne Duncan, the education secretary, says. “Some do a phenomenal job in building college-completion cultures and helping first-generation, low-income and minority students graduate, and some do a horrendous job.” When I asked Mr. Duncan last
year whether the Obama administration would consider changing federal financial aid to encourage success, he said, “Yes, stay tuned.”

It has not happened yet, though, which makes it a good opportunity for the White House and Congress to work together now.

The basic problem is that colleges receive government money based largely on how many students they enroll. Perversely, colleges can even help their budgets by having a lot of dropouts. A college with a high dropout rate will have many more freshmen and sophomores than upperclassmen, and freshmen and sophomores are cheaper to have on campus, because they take big lecture classes.

Without any financial incentive to turn students into graduates, most colleges have paid far too little attention to their graduation rates. Nationwide, only about half of teenagers who enroll in college end up graduating.

The economic consequences have been severe. You often hear that income has stagnated in recent years, but it hasn’t stagnated for four-year college graduates. They have received a 19 percent raise since 1979, on top of inflation. People who went to college without getting a four-year degree — a combination of dropouts and two-year graduates — suffered a 7 percent pay cut.

Fortunately, a few states have started to respond. Most intriguingly, West Virginia’s biggest merit scholarship requires students to remain on track to graduate in four years. The policy has lifted the four-year graduation rate of recipients by almost 7 percentage points, according to research by Judith Scott-Clayton of Columbia University.

Indiana, meanwhile, has tweaked its formula for financing public colleges, to give more money to those with higher graduation rates. The formula also takes into account students’ economic backgrounds, in an effort to recognize that some colleges have an inherently tougher job turning freshmen into graduates. But even in Indiana, the amount of public money that depends on results is small, less than 10 percent of the total. And virtually no federal funding is tied to results.
In the federal budget, the obvious candidates for cutbacks come from a grab bag of programs that cost about $12 billion a year and make up about one-fourth of federal spending on colleges. (An additional $32 billion goes to Pell grants, scholarships for low- and middle-income families, which do appear to lift graduation rates by helping students stay enrolled.)

Most of the $12 billion subsidizes student loans so that interest doesn’t accrue while students are still in college. That may be a nice little benefit, but it does not help students stay in school. For one thing, it is too complicated to persuade people worried about tuition costs to enroll in college anyway. Even without the subsidy, their loan repayment would not begin until later; the subsidy merely reduces future payments.

The remainder of the $12 billion is no better. Many of these dollars are matching funds for financial aid awarded by colleges, which means much of the money ends up going to wealthy private colleges. Sandy Baum, a George Washington University economist who led a recent financial aid commission, calls the allocation of this money “inequitable and inefficient.”

It isn’t hard to think of more productive ways to use the $12 billion. Some of it could pay for promising state programs like West Virginia’s or Indiana’s. Other money could turn into additional aid for Pell recipients who remain on track to graduate in four years. Yet other money could reward colleges that succeed in graduating large numbers of low-income students — an idea the White House is considering, officials say.

The fairest objection to policies focused on graduation rates is that they could cause some colleges to graduate undeserving students. And it’s true — they could. But such cases would probably be the rare exception.

Kevin Carey of Education Sector, a Washington research group, points out that most dropouts today are not students unable to keep up with college work. Instead, they generally attend colleges that, research shows, are neither very rigorous nor very engaged in students’ lives. Many of these colleges devote little energy to thinking about — let alone improving — their graduation rate. Changing the funding rules could help change that mind-set.

The historical returns to education have been so high that I would rather see Washington both increase higher education spending and make it less
wasteful. If anything, the federal government’s role is more important now, when many states are cutting education spending.

But even if Congress won’t increase spending, it can still do a lot to improve spending. The same is true of states, which together spend much more on colleges than Washington. A dollar that’s well spent on education today will more than pay for itself tomorrow, through faster economic growth. For that reason, a tougher approach to college funding is actually a form of deficit reduction as well.

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**Slow Growth in U.S. College Graduation Rate**
The college graduation rate has risen considerably less in the United States over the last decade than in many other countries. Several countries, like Japan, surpassed the United States, while others, like the Czech Republic, approached it.

*The graduation rate is the ratio of all people earning their first college degree (not including two-year or vocational degrees), relative to the total population of people at the average college graduation age.*

*Source: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development*