

Disability, Long Term Care & Employee Benefit Advisory

Why Our Children Will Die Too Soon

After decades of advancements in modern day medicine, why are mortality rates *increasing* in 2016? Regrettably, today's parents can expect to live longer lives than their children, a sad commentary on today's lifestyle. Bottom line . . . the obesity epidemic amongst the children of America is shortening their lifespan, causing mortality rates to head in the wrong direction.

America's first lady has been championing the anti-obesity cause in America's schools. Of course public school officials should remove access to sugary high calorie beverages from our nation's cafeterias. However, our children spend less than 20 percent of their time in the classrooms. What good does it do when a child can't drink high calorie beverages in school when their home refrigerator is full of sugar laden beverages?

I recently heard someone ask "what was the most important thing we can teach our children?" The answer was to teach our children how to be when they leave us. In other words, prepare them for life when they're out on their own. Remembering my early years as a parent, I knew my daughters were learning about life "through my eyes". I was always aware of the responsibility I felt as a role model. And *that* is what I would hope would be at the top of the job description list of every parent, as a caring teacher of our children.

For today since this is an article about obesity and mortality rates, this is my plea to the parents of young children. The national focus encouraging healthier diets in public schools has placed a spotlight on America's obesity crisis. Indeed, inaction on the matter will have startling results, including a lifespan for members of our newest generation from two to five years *lower* than that for the previous generation, according to the *New England Journal of Medicine*. Think about this for a moment—with all the medical advances our society has produced; this generation's children will have life expectancies less than their parents. The glaring culprit is in my mind, fast food (I have never seen a child turn down a french fry), video games, and other screen activities that discourage physical activity.

And, whenever we hear about the high incidence of obesity, we're reminded of today's diabetes epidemic. In the U.S., diabetes affects tens of millions of Americans, costs some \$174 billion a year, and ranks as the sixth-leading cause of death in the United States. And studies indicate that the greatest risk factor for type 2 diabetes is being overweight, a characteristic shared by 85 percent of diabetics. According to the *New England Journal of Medicine*, nine in ten cases of type 2 diabetes could be prevented through exercise, healthier diets, smoking cessation, and other healthy behaviors. Even modest weight loss has been found to help people with diabetes achieve and sustain blood glucose control and live healthier, longer, and more active lives.

Complications from diabetes, as reported by the Defeat Diabetes Foundation, are legion. Most troubling, in my opinion, is that diabetes sufferers are 65 percent more likely than their peers to develop Alzheimer's disease. In addition, high proportions of people with diabetes incur damage to their nervous system, including carpal tunnel syndrome and impaired sensation in their feet or hands. And people with diabetes are two to four times more likely than others to develop heart disease and six times more likely to suffer a stroke. Not surprisingly, people with diabetes live an average of six fewer years than their nondiabetic peers. All this from a condition that more often than not can be prevented by reducing consumption of the sugar, carbohydrates, and processed foods so prevalent in the American diet.

Point being, parents of young children in the U.S. need to fully acknowledge and understand the health risks their children are facing today and in the years to come. They're facing the challenge of being overweight and the increased chances of becoming a child diabetic. A young diabetic today will face a 65% greater risk of developing Alzheimer's disease in their later years. Moreover, a diabetic lives six years less than non-diabetics. Diabetic children have a much greater health disparity than people without disabilities.

The message is very loud and clear. But it must be heard, understood, accepted and acted upon! The key to good parenting begins with loving our children yet we must take it one step further. We need to start with accepting that we control how long our children will live. We hold their mortality in the palm of our hands. When we pacify them with French fries and sugary drinks, WE ARE GUARANTEEING to help shorten their life span. They'll die too soon and long after we're gone. Is this the legacy you want to leave with your children? I hope not.

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Allan Checkoway, RHU most recently authored "***I'm Disabled . . . Now What?***", created for people whose lives have been impacted by changes in their overall health. Fortunately, our decades of experiences in working with people who have become disabled, sometimes ending up in long term care situations has given us a unique perspective that can benefit our readers. We've taken what we believe to be all the best up to date accessABLE resources from a multitude of resources, putting them all together in one place in "***I'm Disabled . . . Now What?***" and on our new website www.DisabilityandSeniorResources.com. **We are dedicated to helping restore active lifestyles.** Allan is presently the Principal of Disability Services Group, an Employee Benefit Advisory firm. Allan's address is 661 Highland Ave. Suite 103, Needham, MA 02494, tel: 781.400.5055; email: allan@disabilityservices.com