

Focus on developmental approach to obesity in children and adolescents

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New studies of factors affecting the risk of obesity in children and adolescents—as well as promising approaches to prevention and treatment—are assembled in the special October *Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics*, the official journal of the Society for Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics.

The special issue emphasizes a developmental viewpoint on the crucial problem of childhood [obesity](#), including studies with a cultural focus contributed by professionals across a wide range of disciplines. Highlighting the SDBP's mission and values, the papers present "a developmental framework for understanding pediatric obesity and informing interventions that work," according to Guest Editors Carolyn E. Ievers-Landis, PhD, and Elissa Jelalian, PhD.

Interdisciplinary Studies of Childhood Obesity with a Developmental Focus

The special issue includes ten new research papers addressing obesity in every period of development: from early and middle childhood, through adolescence and young adulthood. Pediatric obesity has become a major health problem, with about one-third of U.S. children and adolescents being overweight or obese. In addition to lifelong health consequences, obesity adversely affects children's quality of life, self-esteem, and peer relationships.

Several studies in the special issue highlight newly identified factors affecting the risk of obesity in children and teens, which may help to identify youth at risk and inform targeted interventions. Findings include:

- Obesity risk among low-income minority children whose parents were born outside the United States is sometimes lower compared to those with U.S.-born parents, but is affected by the environment of the home
- New insights into combinations of social and behavioral factors affecting obesity risk in preschoolers
- An increased risk of obesity among some boys with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder
- A link between perceptions of family functioning and [childhood obesity](#) risk, including a potentially important role of fathers
- High rates of "emotional and external eating" among children who have difficulty regulating their emotions
- Exercise and sedentary behaviors relate to the amount of calories consumed by adolescents who are obese

Other papers evaluate emerging approaches to the prevention or treatment of obesity. Several studies focus on promising interventions for minority youth, who are at increased risk of obesity. Findings of the intervention studies include:

- Spending free time with peers may help to reduce obesity risk among African American middle school-aged children.
- Tailored "motivational interviewing" approaches may be effective when talking to African American teens about obesity and weight loss.
- An intervention to teach low-income teen mothers about nutrition and physical activity helps to promote healthy behaviors.

- High levels of psychosocial problems warrant special treatment approaches for children and teens who are obese.

The papers are contributed by an international group of professionals in pediatrics and psychology as well as other disciplines including public health, exercise and nutrition science, and social work. The guest editors conclude "Our hope is that the collection of research presented in this special issue of JDBP focused on [pediatric obesity](#) will play a role in sparking new ideas and ways of exploring research and clinical pathways, thus enabling [children](#), adolescents, and their families to achieve healthier outcomes."

Provided by Wolters Kluwer Health

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