Weight-Loss Surgery is a Viable Option for Treating Obese Children, Says Pediatrics Journal

It’s easier to break something than it is to fix it…and the way we take care of ourselves is broken. It’s broken to the point that a new study published in Pediatrics, the Official Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics, states that more obese children and young adults should consider weight-loss surgery as a treatment. After doing a followup with patients up to twelve years after weight loss surgery, study authors found that patients’ Body Mass Index (BMI) decreased an average of 29 percent and instances of diabetes and high blood pressure significantly dropped.

Why Weight Loss Surgery?

According to the Centers for Disease Control, obesity affects 13.7 million children between the ages of 2 and 19 in the U.S. Data shows that almost one in five children in the United States is obese. Obesity is the number one chronic illness in U.S. children, and it can lead to serious health problems later in life like diabetes, cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal disorders, and cancer.

Related: ***Holistic Guide to Healing the Endocrine System and Balancing Our Hormones***

It’s impossible to attribute the obesity epidemic to one factor, though there are likely culprits. In the United States, portion sizes are out of control. Look no further than fast food, something that more than 1 in 3 Americans eats on a given day. A McDonald’s hamburger in 1955 topped out at 3.7 ounces. Today, a Quarter Pounder Deluxe is 9.2 ounces. Kids

are being served more, so they’re eating more.

But at the same time, they’re also eating less. Nearly two-thirds of global calories come from four crops: wheat, corn, soy, and rice. In addition to the lack of diversity, most of those crops end up in highly processed foods. These are the foods that are widely available, from gas stations to grocery stores. Children eating a western diet are eating more highly processed, nutritionally deficient food than they have at any time in the past.

Weight Loss Surgery as an Option

Reducing obesity requires a multi-pronged strategy: get educated, stop eating unhealthy food, and start eating vegetables. But broccoli is not an inherently crave-able food. It’s especially unappealing to a palate used to an endless supply of processed cereals, nuggets, and gummy fruit snacks. Children are not known for their ability to choose long-term benefits over immediate gratification.

From that viewpoint, weight-loss surgery is a viable option for childhood obesity. The most commonly performed weight-loss surgeries performed on children and adolescents are gastric bypass surgery and adjustable gastric band surgery. These surgeries are generally successful, as most estimates find that 80 percent of patients experience an improved quality of life.

Related: *Stop Eating Like That and Start Eating Like This – Your Guide to Homeostasis Through Diet*

Widening the Gap

Bariatric surgery can make a difference in the lives of obese children, but it doesn’t address how the child got to that point in the first place. It also ignores the growing portion of the population that cannot afford to pay for a $20,000

surgery. It is likely that the majority of children who would benefit from this surgery are not going to be able to afford it or the maintenance that follows it, yet lower-income kids are more likely to be overweight or obese. According to the CDC, “the prevalence of obesity decreased with increasing level of education of the household head among children and adolescents aged 2-19 years.” The children that can afford weight-loss surgery are less likely to need it because their parents will likely be better informed, they will have better access to education and healthy food, and they will have healthcare coverage. Surgery is one way to lose weight, but it doesn’t address why losing weight was needed in the first place.

Sources:

- *More Obese Children Should Get Weight-Loss Surgery, Doctors Say* – Live Science
- *More severely obese kids should get surgery, MD group says* – AP
- *Pediatric Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery: Evidence, Barriers, and Best Practices* – Pediatrics
- *Childhood Obesity Facts* – CDC
- *More than 1 in 3 adults eat fast food on a given day, CDC survey finds* – USA Today
- *Childhood and Adolescent Obesity* – ASMBS