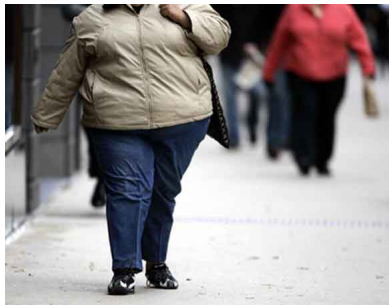


Obesity linked to poor mother-toddler bond - Tehran Times

Health Desk

28 December 2011 14:33 -



Tots who have a poor relationship with their moms are more likely to be obese by the time they turn 15, a new study shows. So just how does a toddler's less-than-stellar relationship with mom affect risk for being obese as a teen?

The reasons are not fully understood, but study researchers suggest these toddlers, when coping with stress, may begin to use food as a source of comfort in place of mom at a very early age. The findings appear in the January 2012 issue of *Pediatrics*.

One thing, however, is clear: Childhood obesity rates in the U.S. are getting higher. As it stands, about 1 in 3 children in the U.S. are overweight or obese and this includes pre-schoolers. This suggests that whatever is causing the uptick starts pretty early.

Relationship with mom may play role in childhood obesity

Researchers analyzed close to 1,000 toddlers' emotional bonds with their moms at 15 months, 2, and 3 years of age. They measured mom's sensitivity during 15-minute videotaped play sessions. Maternal sensitivity refers to a mother's ability to know what her child is feeling and respond with comfort, consistency, and warmth.

The researchers also looked for signs of "secure attachment" among toddlers. This means that an infant or toddler sees mom as a safe home base.

Toddlers who had moms with low sensitivity to their needs and who overall had the poorest-quality relationship with their moms were twice as likely to be obese at age 15, the results show.

"This study provides evidence that paying attention to the quality of the relationship between parents and children could impact children's weight status," says researcher Sarah E.

Anderson, PhD. She is an epidemiologist at the Ohio State University College of Public Health in Columbus. The results "underscore the importance of early childhood for obesity prevention."

Can proper parenting prevent child obesity?

It's possible that some changes in early parenting style may help prevent obesity, says Laurie Miller Brotman, PhD. She is a professor of child and adolescent psychiatry and the director of the Harris Obesity Prevention Effort at New York University Langone Medical Center in New York City. "Good-quality parenting is important for many things, including physical health," she says. "These findings, as well as the failure of the programs that try to teach kids about what to eat and tell them to exercise more, suggest that the fundamentals of parenting can make a difference." These fundamentals include effective limit setting, discipline, and not using

foods -- particularly fattening ones like ice cream -- as rewards. Such

parenting will help kids regulate their own emotions and develop coping strategies. "You don't have to use food to cope if you know what to do when you are stressed out," Brotman tells WebMD.

It'

s never too early to start developing these skills.

Alan Delamater, PhD, is a professor of pediatrics and psychology at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. He says the study findings "add to our knowledge about what can affect whether kids become overweight or obese."

The new study results make sense given the prevalence of obesity in preschoolers, he says. What is missing is the "black box," he says. "We need to figure out how the early mother-child relationship affects risk for becoming overweight or obese."

"It is likely that these children begin eating to soothe themselves starting at very young ages," Delamater says. "We know that packing on excess weight or fat at an early age makes someone more likely to be overweight or obese as they grow up."

(Source: CBS News)