



# The Fast Food Trap: How to Help Children Avoid the Pitfalls of Unhealthy Eating

Jason P Block\*

Department of Pediatrics, Boston Children's Hospital, United States

## INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the prevalence of childhood obesity has risen dramatically in the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), approximately 1 in 5 children and adolescents are now considered obese. While there are many factors that contribute to childhood obesity, one of the most significant is the consumption of fast food. Fast food is defined as food that is prepared and served quickly, often through a drive-thru window or other takeout options. It is typically high in calories, saturated fat, sugar, and sodium, and low in nutrients such as fibre, vitamins, and minerals. Despite its reputation for being unhealthy, fast food is a staple of the American diet, with millions of people consuming it on a daily basis.

## DESCRIPTION

The relationship between fast food and childhood obesity is complex, but there is strong evidence to suggest that consuming fast food on a regular basis can increase a child's risk of becoming overweight or obese. In this article, we will explore the factors that contribute to this link and discuss some strategies for reducing the consumption of fast food among children.

## Fast Food and Calorie Intake

One of the main reasons why fast food is linked to childhood obesity is that it tends to be high in calories. Fast food meals often contain more calories than a child needs in an entire day, particularly when combined with sugary drinks or desserts. Over time, consuming more calories than the body needs can lead to weight gain and obesity.

In addition to being high in calories, fast food is also low in nutri-

ents. This means that even if a child consumes a large amount of fast food, they may still be lacking in essential vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients that are necessary for healthy growth and development.

## Fast Food and Portion Sizes

Another factor that contributes to the link between fast food and childhood obesity is the large portion sizes that are often served. Fast food restaurants offer meals that are much larger than what would be considered a normal serving size, and this can lead to overconsumption of calories.

For example, a typical fast food meal may include a burger, fries, and a large soda, which can contain more than 1,000 calories. This is significantly more than the recommended daily calorie intake for most children. In addition, fast food restaurants often encourage customers to "upsized" their meals for just a few extra cents, which can further increase calorie intake.

## Fast Food and Marketing to Children

Another factor that contributes to the link between fast food and childhood obesity is the aggressive marketing tactics used by fast food companies to target children. Fast food restaurants often use colourful packaging, toys, and other gimmicks to entice children to choose their products.

In addition, fast food companies often sponsor children's sports teams, schools, and other events, which can give the impression that fast food is a normal and acceptable part of a healthy lifestyle. Studies have shown that children who are exposed to food marketing are more likely to consume unhealthy foods and are at a higher risk of becoming overweight or obese.

<b>Received:</b>	31-January-2023	<b>Manuscript No:</b>	IPJCO-23-16045
<b>Editor assigned:</b>	02-February-2023	<b>PreQC No:</b>	IPJCO-23-16045 (PQ)
<b>Reviewed:</b>	16-February-2023	<b>QC No:</b>	IPJCO-23-16045
<b>Revised:</b>	21-February-2023	<b>Manuscript No:</b>	IPJCO-23-16045 (R)
<b>Published:</b>	28-February-2023	<b>DOI:</b>	10.36648/2572-5394.23.08.009

**Corresponding author** Jason P Block, Department of Pediatrics, Boston Children's Hospital, United States, E-mail: jason@gmail.com

**Citation** Block JP (2023) The Fast Food Trap: How to Help Children Avoid the Pitfalls of Unhealthy Eating. J Child Obesity. 8:009.

**Copyright** © 2023 Block JP. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

## Reducing the Consumption of Fast Food among Children

Given the significant risks associated with consuming fast food on a regular basis, it is important to take steps to reduce the amount of fast food that children consume. Here are some strategies that can help:

**Educate Children and Families about Nutrition:** One of the most important strategies for reducing the consumption of fast food is educating children and families about nutrition. This can involve teaching children about healthy food choices, the importance of portion control, and the risks associated with consuming too many calories.

Parents can also help to promote healthy eating habits by modelling healthy behaviours themselves. By making healthy choices at home and encouraging children to try new foods, parents can help to create a culture of health that supports healthy eating.

**Provide Access to Healthy Food Options:** Another important strategy for reducing the consumption of fast food is increasing access to healthy food options. This can involve promoting healthy food choices in schools, grocery stores, and other community settings.

Schools can play a particularly important role in promoting healthy eating habits among children. By offering nutritious meals and snacks, teaching children about healthy food choices and promoting physical activity, schools can help to create a supportive environment for healthy growth and development.

In addition, communities can work to increase access to healthy food options by supporting local farmers' markets, community gardens, and other initiatives that promote healthy eating.

## Limit Marketing of Unhealthy Foods to Children

Another strategy for reducing the consumption of fast food among children is limiting the marketing of unhealthy foods to children. This can involve advocating for policies that restrict food marketing to children, such as the Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative.

Parents can also play a role in limiting their children's exposure to food marketing by monitoring their children's media consumption and encouraging them to make healthy choices.

## Encourage Physical Activity

Finally, promoting physical activity can help to reduce the risk of childhood obesity by burning calories and promoting healthy growth and development. Parents can encourage physical activity by setting a good example themselves and by encouraging children to participate in sports, dance classes, and other physical activities that they enjoy.

Schools and communities can also play a role in promoting physical activity by offering after-school programs, sports teams, and other activities that encourage children to be active.

## CONCLUSION

Childhood obesity is a serious and growing problem in the United States, and fast food consumption is one of the factors that contribute to this issue. By understanding the risks associated with consuming fast food on a regular basis and taking steps to promote healthy eating habits, communities can help to reduce the prevalence of childhood obesity and promote healthy growth and development for all children.