

Top 10 Things We Know About Young Children and Health Equity...

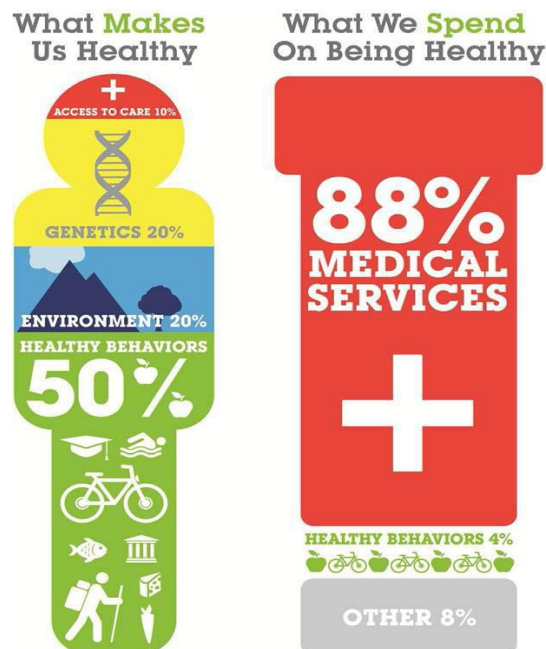
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CHILD HEALTH IS IN JEOPARDY.

For the first time in America's history, children face the prospect of growing up less healthy, living shorter lives and being less equipped to compete and lead in a world economy than previous generations.

According to National Survey of Children's Health 2016 data, 94.6 percent of U.S. children zero to 5 years have health insurance coverage. Medical advances have virtually eradicated many prior crippling or life-threatening infectious diseases and found new treatments for many childhood illnesses and conditions. Genetics, medical care and treatment, however, contribute only a small portion to child and adult health and life expectancy. Environment (social determinants of health and health behaviors, particularly those of parents as they relate to their children) accounts for a much greater share. In fact, behavior and environment account for 70 percent of what makes us healthy, yet we spend less than 15 percent of our health resources in these areas (Figure 1).

Figure 1.



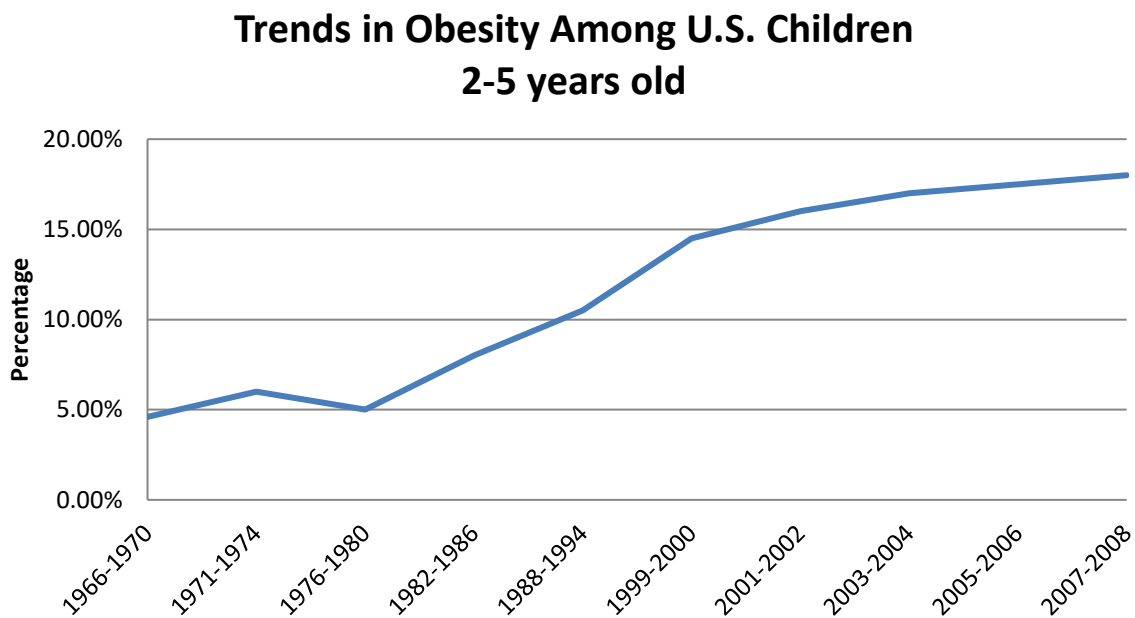
Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, F as in Fat: How Obesity Threatens America's Future 2013

Young children do not have control over what behaviors (i.e. healthy eating, exercise, etc.)

they can engage in. They rely on their parents’ ability to provide a healthy, nurturing environment and model healthy behaviors. When parents are not able to provide a healthy environment and/or support healthy behaviors, children’s health suffers.

For example, with respect to “lifestyle” choices, the growing obesity rate has profound implications to future health and longevity. Obesity itself has its roots in childhood and a young child’s family’s access to healthy foods, exercise and nutrition. In recent years, there has been a rise in childhood obesity in the U.S. (Figure 2). This rise has huge health consequences in subsequent diabetes, heart disease and other juvenile and adult morbidities.

Figure 2.



Source: Adapted from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, “F as in Fat: How Obesity Threatens America’s Future” 2013

Unfortunately, a larger share of the young child population today is living in neighborhoods with higher environmental risks and in families who struggle economically and/or socially to provide a consistent nurturing environment. Further, in comparison with other industrial countries, the well-being of America’s children – from birth through the time they reach adulthood – has declined. This decline has implications for the ability of America’s children to compete and lead in a world economy. UNICEF’s Office of Research 2017 report card created a composite table of rich countries in nine child well-being areas. The U.S. has consistently ranked in the bottom third of developed countries¹ (Figure 3).

¹ UNICEF Office of Research (2017). Building the Future: Children and the Sustainable Development Goals in Rich Countries’, Innocenti Report Card 14. 2017 https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/RC14_eng.pdf

Figure 3.

High Range	Middle Range	Low Range
1. Norway	15. Austria	29. Malta
2. Germany	16. Spain	30. Slovakia
3. Denmark	17. Estonia	31. Greece
4. Sweden	18. Portugal	32. Hungary
5. Finland	19. France	33. Lithuania
6. Iceland	20. Czech Republic	34. New Zealand
7. Switzerland	21. Australia	35. Israel
8. Republic of Korea	22. Croatia	36. Turkey
9. Slovenia	23. Poland	37. <u>United States</u>
10. Netherlands	24. Italy	38. Mexico
11. Ireland	25. Canada	39. Romania
12. Japan	26. Belgium	40. Bulgaria
13. United Kingdom	27. Cyprus	41. Chile
14. Luxembourg	28. Latvia	

Additional Resources:

- World Health Organization: 10 Facts about Early Child Development as a Social Determinant of Health
http://www.who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/topics/child/development/10facts/en/
- World Health Organization: Social Determinants of Health: The Solid Facts, 2nd Edition, http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/98438/e81384.pdf