

Scouting Sunday topic paper: Childhood obesity



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Topic 2: Kids outdoors and childhood obesity

Question: It would help young people to be active outdoors and do more sport if.....?

We often see and hear in the media that young people are spending too much time playing computer games or watching TV. They are spending less and less time outside. We believe that young people who discover the freedom of the great outdoors are better prepared for the challenges of life through the skills they develop.

Why is playing outdoors good for my health?

Young people and children who spend time outdoors are healthier and less overweight and outdoor activities bring children and young people together from across different schools and social classes. The Government's public health white paper in 2005 accepted that the loss of opportunities for spontaneous outdoor play is one of the main causes of childhood obesity. Dr William Deitz, the leading US Federal Government expert on nutrition and physical activity, claims that play may be the 'magic bullet' experts have been searching for, saying in a [British Medical Journal editorial](#), that 'opportunities for spontaneous play may be the only requirement that young children need to increase their physical activity.'

What is obesity?

However, whilst we know that playing outdoors is good for our health, many young people do not do so and are in danger of poor health because of their weight. Recent research shows that that [11-16 year olds in the UK eat on average 133 pre-packaged ready meals and takeaways a year](#) (nearly three every week). This means that many young people are at risk of becoming obese. Obesity is a condition where weight gain has got to the point that it poses a serious threat to health.

What Do the Politicians think should be done about it?

The Labour Government has also set a national target for 85% of school-age children to participate in two hours of PE and sport per week by the end of 2008 (2006/7 School Sport Survey). They have also announced [plans to tell young people and their families when a child is overweight](#) and to help parents access more help in getting their children active. The Conservatives and Liberal Democrats believe that [more school nurses](#) will tackle the problem.

So what do you think should be done? And what do you think of the politician's ideas?

News

Have children lost touch with nature?

The Guardian, 1 August 2008

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/blog/2008/aug/01/havechildrenlosttouchwith>

Get moving

The Guardian, 27 May 2008

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2008/may/27/leeds.child.obesity>

Genes not poor diet blamed for most cases of childhood obesity

The Times, 7 February 2008

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/science/article3321748.ece>

No outdoor play 'hurts children'

BBC, 10 September 2007

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6986544.stm>

MySpace 'link to child obesity'

The Telegraph, 16 November 2007

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1569440/MySpace-%27link-to-child-obesity%27.html>

Forums

'How to Encourage Outdoor Play' discussion

ParentsCentre, October 2007

<http://www.parentscentre.gov.uk/forum/messageview.cfm?catid=124&threadid=35547>

Further resources

Children's Play Council

<http://www.ncb.org.uk/cpc.htm>

Free Play Network

<http://www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk>

Kids Club Network site

<http://www.kidsclubs.com>

London Play

<http://www.londonplay.org.uk>

National Playing Fields Association

<http://www.npfa.co.uk>

NSPCC Kids Zone

<http://www.nspcc.co.uk/homepage2/>

Scientific study on preventing childhood obesity

[Summerbell CD, Waters E, Edmunds LD, et al.

Interventions for preventing obesity in children.

Cochrane Database Syst Rev 2005, Issue 3]

http://www.mrw.interscience.wiley.com/cochrane/clsrev/articles/CD001871/pdf_fs.html

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/playspace/>

http://www.kidsoutdoors.com/files/Campaign_Launch_Spread.pdf

<http://www.playday.org.uk/>

<http://www.playday.org.uk/PDF/Playday-2008-opinion-poll-summary.pdf>

<http://www.playday.org.uk/PDF/play-naturally-a-review-of-childrens-natural%20play.pdf>