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HAMILTON AQUATIC CLUB TIGERSHARKS.

Problem

Child obesity has become a significant problem of this generation of youngsters threatening to reverse gains in longevity and quality of lifestyle enjoyed by Western Civilization due to related metabolic health problems including diabetes.

Battle with blubber

Childhood obesity rise has Commons committee urging feds to join the battle

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The epidemic of childhood obesity in Canada needs an Olympic effort to reverse the catastrophic trend suggesting today's kids won't live as long as their parents, a House of Commons committee says.

In a report, Healthy Weights for Healthy Kids, the Commons health committee calls on the federal government to take action in order to stop the rising incidence of overweight and obese children by the time of the Vancouver Winter Olympics in 2010.

The situation has reached epidemic proportions as obesity rates among kids have risen almost threefold (to 8% from 3%) between 1978 and 2004. More than one in four (26%) Canadians aged 2 to 17 are now considered either overweight or obese, the report states, citing Statistics Canada figures.

Even so, polling shows that only 9% of parents believe their child is overweight.

"For the first time in recorded history, today's younger generation will live shorter lives than their parents, yet parents ... do not recognize the problem," said Conservative MP Rob Merrifield, the committee's chairman. "We are killing our kids with kindness."

Obesity leads to increased rates of diabetes, heart attacks and other serious health impacts down the road. The health costs already are estimated to exceed \$4.3 billion a year, Merrifield said.

The committee called for a comprehensive public awareness campaign on issues such as healthy weights, food choices and physical activity.

It ties its short-term 2010 goal as an opportunity to dramatically boost awareness and shift people's perception in the same way the public mindset accepted seatbelts in the 1970s.

By 2020, childhood obesity rates should drop to at least 6%, the report recommends.

It also calls for the elimination of trans fats from foods, easy-to-read, front-of-package nutritional information and several other initiatives to benchmark and monitor issues such as physical activity and body-size measures.

The report has no costing for its proposals, but committee member and NDP MP Penny Priddy argued that the costs of letting the problem grow would be far higher.

The report was immediately praised by organizations such as the Canadian Medical Association and the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

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SUN MEDIA FILE PHOTO

More than one in four Canadians aged 2 to 17 are now considered either overweight or obese.

Need

Child obesity needs to be addressed and proportion of overweight kids reduced via novel and effective ways to shift the metabolic balance from accumulation of energy stores (excess adipose tissue and increased body mass index; BMI) to its proper expenditure to allow for a balanced, healthy growth of young organisms.

Rationale of the problem

Overweight kids have difficulties with controlling and then reversing gains in the BMI since their physical activity is reduced and food intake is not. Such kids are not likely going to train and perform at a competitive level in sports requiring gravity-related exercise resulting in attaining healthy athletic body proportions. Therefore such kids will not likely become healthier by attempting to play soccer, football, baseball, hockey, etc.

Proposed Solution

Aquatic sports are conducted with body submerged in the water, therefore, according to the law of Archimedes, lighter than on the dry land by the amount of water displaced by the body. Simply put, anybody in the water can perform a physical exercise, such as propelling himself/herself. Sustained, in-water exercise can allow overweight kids reverse the positive gains in body mass and allow them to slim up. In Hamilton, this very beneficial process has been observed in all kids swimming with HAC. Competitive level swimming offers attractive means of healthy exercise to children and effectively address and reduce the child obesity.

We at HAC believe that apart from offering the youngsters excellent swim training and development leading to the highest individual athletic achievement, we can effectively help overweight kids to slim up, become healthy, athletic, disciplined and become leaders in their school class and in the neighborhood.