

JOINT EVENT

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Factors influencing obesity in school age children 5-11 years**Louise Cremonesini**

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The objective of the study is to identify factors that influence likelihood of obesity in school age children age 5-11 years. The methodology used was critical literature review and through a process of critical review the researcher identified that factors influencing childhood obesity can be attributed across three overarching themes: Parental influence; physical activity and; family mealtimes. Parental obesity holds a strong correlation to the risks of having obese offspring. It is imperative that we enable parents to feel supported when they try to adopt healthier lifestyles and for health care professionals to understand why this is the case. It is also essential that when tackling obesity the whole family approach is taken. Physical activity is important and starting it early can help children to remain active throughout their life course. Evidence tells us this will have both short and long term benefits. Technology has created a population of children who are sedentary with watching TV cited as one of the leading activities in this age group 5-11. Such sedentary behaviors are associated with increased risks for obesity and overweight. Family mealtimes, a growing body of research suggests that having meal times together as a family may help protect against childhood obesity. Specific characteristics of such mealtimes include positive communication; group enjoyment and positive relationship during family meals were all associated with a reduction in childhood obesity. This research demonstrates that health professionals working with children and families need to support higher family functioning with early identification and intervention. Professionals need to adopt a whole family approach in dealing with obesity in order to increase the likelihood of success. A factor also discussed is the need for health professional to be better equipped with the sophisticated communication skills required to engage with children and families when discussing this very sensitive subject.