



Type 2 diabetes epidemic seen looming

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NEW YORK (Reuters Health) - The current pattern of type 2 diabetes in young adults and trends in childhood obesity rates point to a dramatic impact on the future health of adults in the United States, concludes the writer of a report published Monday.

The bulging of kids' waistlines, Dr. Joyce Lee warns, is apt to lead to a large number of younger adults with type 2 diabetes, the serious complications related to the disease, and ultimately, shorter life spans.

"The full impact of the childhood obesity epidemic," Lee warns in the Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, "has yet to be seen because it can take up to 10 years or longer for obese individuals to develop type 2 diabetes."

Lee, a pediatric endocrinologist at the University of Michigan C. S. Mott Children's Hospital, explains that obesity is a key factor in the development of type 2 diabetes, and children who are obese today are more likely to develop type 2 diabetes as young adults.

Because of its complications -- including eye, nerve, kidney and heart damage -- type 2 diabetes has been described as one of the "major threats to human health for the 21st century," Lee notes.

"Recent studies suggest that there have been dramatic increases in type 2 diabetes among individuals in their 20s and 30s, whereas it used to be that individuals developed type 2 diabetes in their late 50s or 60s," she points out.

Lee contends that there needs to be a greater overall investment in reducing childhood obesity, to prevent development of type 2 diabetes.

"Our society heavily invests in the treatment and management of chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes for adults. But it spends very little for the prevention and treatment of childhood obesity to stave off the onset of type 2 diabetes," she writes.

"If there isn't a significant investment in obesity prevention and treatment during childhood within schools, communities, and the health care system, recent trends in childhood obesity will likely lead to increases in type 2 diabetes among young adults, resulting in even greater costs to society and the health care system," Lee concludes.

SOURCE: Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, July 2008.

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