Childhood obesity on the rise among Indian children

_India records about 10 million cases of childhood obesity annually_

New Delhi, 08 June 2017: According to a study published in an international journal called _Paediatric Obesity_, India will have over 17 million obese children by 2025. The country will also be second among 184 countries in terms of the number of obese children. Childhood obesity is one of the leading causes of diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol among children today. Research also indicates that about 70% of obese youth had at least one risk factor for cardiovascular disease.

Childhood obesity is a condition where a child is overweight in comparison to his or her age and height. Statistics say that there are about 10 million cases of childhood obesity in India annually. Although this condition cannot be cured, it can definitely be managed through the right approach at the right time.

Speaking about this, Padma Shri Awardee Dr K K Aggarwal, National President Indian Medical Association (IMA) and President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and Dr RN Tandon – Honorary Secretary General IMA in a joint statement, said," Obesity in children and the associated side effects are a major cause of concern today. Junk food and lifestyle are to be blamed for the increasing number of obese children. Many school canteens sell pizzas and cold drinks without giving a second thought to the health implications surrounding such a diet. Though many schools have taken steps to stop selling unhealthy food in their canteen, a lot more still needs to be done. It has also become easier for parents today to take kids out to eat in malls and restaurants. Outdoor activities have been replaced by digital devices, and children are eating more calories than they can expend. There is a need to create awareness on the fact that such a lifestyle can lead to complications in children at a very early age."

Obese children and adolescents are more prone to bone and joint problems, sleep apnea, and social and psychological problems such as stigmatization and poor self-esteem. Overweight children are also more likely to grow up into overweight adults.
Adding further, Dr Aggarwal, said, "It can become very difficult for a child to let go of the addiction for junk food once it becomes a habit. It is important that parents start inculcating good nutritional habits from the beginning in their children. Ensuring enough physical activity right from an early age is an equally important aspect of every child’s growth."

Here are some tips to tackle childhood obesity.

- Encourage healthy eating habits right at the onset.
- Try making favorite dishes healthier. Few changes can make even snacks healthier.
- Avoid tempting children with calorie-rich food. It is okay to treat them but in moderation and by limiting high-fat and high-sugar or salty snacks.
- Make kids understand the importance of being physically active.
- Lead by example. Indulge in at least 60 minutes of moderate to intense physical activity every day.
- Reduce sedentary time. While reading is a good option, too much of screen time is not. Replace screen time with the outdoors and fun activities to keep children engaged.

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**About IMA**: Indian Medical Association is the only representative, national voluntary organization of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well being of the community at large. It has its Headquarter in Delhi and State / Terr. Branches in 30 States and Union Territories. It has over 2, 60,000 doctors as its members through more than 1765 active local branches spread across the country.

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