

## Connections Between Poverty, Hunger & Overweight

**FOOD INSECURE AND LOW-INCOME PEOPLE** are especially vulnerable to obesity because of risk factors associated with poverty. People with limited means are subject to the same influences as other Americans (e.g., sedentary lifestyles, increased portion sizes), but they also face additional challenges in adopting healthful behaviors, including:

- Limited resources
- Lack of access to healthy, affordable foods
- Fewer opportunities for physical activity
- Cycles of food deprivation and overeating
- High levels of stress
- Greater exposure to marketing of obesity-promoting products
- Limited access to health care

### Limited Resources and Lack of Access to Healthy, Affordable Foods

Low-income neighborhoods frequently lack full-service grocery stores and farmers' markets where



residents can buy a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy products. Instead, residents—especially those without reliable transportation—may be limited to shopping at small neighborhood convenience and corner stores, where fresh produce and minimally processed foods are limited, if available at all.

- When available, healthy food is often more expensive, while foods with refined grains, added sugars and fats are generally inexpensive and readily available in low-income communities. Households with limited resources to buy

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### did you know...

- ▶ More than 23 million Americans, including 6.5 million children, live in food deserts—areas that are more than a mile away from a supermarket.
- ▶ Nearly 45% of children living in poverty are overweight or obese compared with 22% of children living in households with incomes 4 times the poverty level.
- ▶ Some of the more popular international pizza toppings are: pickled ginger, minced mutton, tofu, squid and green peas. Pepperoni is America's favorite pizza topping.
- ▶ Americans eat 100 acres of pizza each day or 350 slices per second! Each man, woman and child in America eats an average of 23 pounds of pizza a year.

*Journal of Endocrinology and Metabolism, President's Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition, Catchusa.org*

### Quotable Quotes

“A cook is creative, marrying ingredients in the way a poet marries words.”

– Roger Verge

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## Connections Between Poverty, Hunger & Overweight

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enough food often try to stretch their food budgets by purchasing cheap, energy-dense foods that are filling.

- When available, fresh produce is often of poorer quality in lower income neighborhoods, which diminishes the appeal of these foods to buyers.
- Low-income communities often have many more fast food restaurants, especially near schools. These restaurants serve energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods at relatively low prices. Fast food is associated with a diet high in calories and low in nutrients.



- The “feast or famine” situation is especially a problem for low-income parents, particularly mothers, who often restrict their food intake and sacrifice their own nutrition in order to protect their children from hunger. Such a coping mechanism puts them at risk for obesity—and research shows that parental obesity, especially maternal obesity, is a strong predictor of childhood obesity.

### High Levels of Stress

- Low-income families, including children, may face high levels of stress due to the financial and emotional pressures of

food insecurity, low-wage work, lack of access to health care, inadequate and long-distance transportation, poor housing, neighborhood violence and other factors. Research has linked stress to obesity in youth and adults, including stress from job-related demands and difficulty paying bills. Stress may lead to weight gain through stress-induced hormonal and metabolic changes as well as unhealthy eating. Chronic stress may also trigger anxiety and depression, which are both associated with child and adult obesity.

### Greater Exposure to Marketing of Obesity-Promoting Products

- Low-income youth and adults are exposed to disproportionately more marketing and advertising that encourages the consumption of unhealthy foods and discourages physical activity (e.g., fast food, sugary beverages, television shows and video games). Such advertising targets children and has a strong influence on the preferences, diets and purchases they and their families make.

### Fewer Opportunities for Physical Activity

- Lower income neighborhoods have fewer opportunities and resources for physical activity than higher income neighborhoods, including fewer parks, green spaces, bike paths and recreational facilities, making it more difficult to lead a physically active lifestyle. A low level of physical activity is a risk factor for obesity.
- Crime, traffic and unsafe playground equipment are common barriers to physical activity in low-income communities. Because of safety concerns, children and adults alike in these communities are more likely to stay indoors and engage in sedentary activities, such as watching television or playing video games. Living in an unsafe neighborhood is a risk factor for obesity.
- Low-income children are less likely to participate in organized sports. This is consistent with reports by low-income parents that expense and lack of transportation are barriers to their children’s participation in sports.

### Cycles of Food Deprivation and Overeating

- Families who are eating less or skipping meals to stretch limited food dollars may overeat when food does become available, resulting in chronic ups and downs in food intake that can contribute to weight gain. This can also lead to an unhealthy preoccupation with food and metabolic changes that promote fat storage – all the worse when in combination with overeating. Unfortunately, overconsumption is compounded given the availability of cheap, energy-dense foods in low-income communities.

### Limited Access to Health Care

- Many low-income people lack access to basic health care or if health care is available, it may be of lower quality. This results in a lack of diagnosis and treatment of emerging chronic health problems like obesity.

— Adapted from *Food Research and Action Center* article.

## KIDS' HEALTH & SAFETY

# Identifying Local Parks with KaBOOM!

### Map of Play

#### Children need at least 60 minutes of active play every day.

Active play (without rules and instructions) promotes creativity, relieves stress and is a great way for children to have fun. Open space outside promotes physical activity by encouraging young children to run, skip and jump! Playing with friends teaches little ones how to share and take turns. Finally, what better way to learn about nature than to find a squiggly worm or allow a butterfly to land on your nose?

#### Where do you take children to engage in active play?

Most of us go to the local parks and playgrounds but how do we know which ones are the best? Is the play space safe? Does the park have age appropriate swings? Are there benches to sit on? Does the park have restrooms? What is an easy tool that can tell us how to locate the nearest park with everything we need to make our active play outing a safe and enjoyable experience?

#### Did you know that KaBOOM! is a national play organization with a "Map of Play" on their website?

"Map of Play" allows a local resident to enter information about neighborhood parks and playgrounds. All you have to do is enter a zip code or city and a map appears showing you a play space near you. There's a mobile phone app, too. *Playgrounds!* uses your smart phone's GPS or a zip code to locate playgrounds near you. The best thing about "Map of Play" is that it is user generated; neighbors in your city found the park and uploaded information about it for you!



#### What if you look onto the site and you don't see parks in your city listed?

Well, that means you can be the helpful neighbor! If you are interested in uploading information about parks in your neighborhood here are some key things to look for during your next local park visit:

1. Is the play equipment age appropriate? Some play structures will have signs to let you know what ages should play on it.
2. Is the play space fenced in?
3. Are there restrooms and water fountains? Are they functional?
4. Are there sidewalks leading to the park? Safe cross walks on the entry way and corners?
5. Are there benches around the play space? Picnic tables or BBQ pits?
6. Is the park clean? Do you see litter or graffiti? Are there trash cans available?
7. Finally make note of other games for children and families to engage in play: tic-tac-toe panels, sand-box, pathways, basketball courts or soccer fields.
8. Finally take pictures so that folks visiting the site can see how wonderful your park is!

Going on an outing to the park and sharing information on KaBOOM! Map of Play is a great way to make sure that children are getting enough activity during the day, but also a wonderful way to be of service to your community.

To visit the KaBOOM! Map of Play website go to: <http://mapofplay.kaboom.org>

— By Tonya Love, *Healthy and Active Before Five*

## 4<sup>th</sup> of July Slow Cooker “Baked” Beans

Ground beef .....	1 ½ lbs.	Butter beans, drained .....	15 oz. can
Bacon (optional).....	4 oz.	Garbanzo or lima beans, drained .....	15 oz. can
Onion, chopped.....	1 large	Ketchup.....	1 cup
Garlic, minced.....	2 cloves	Brown sugar.....	¼ cup
Pork and Beans.....	15 oz. can	White vinegar.....	¼ cup
Kidney beans, drained.....	15 oz. can		

1. Brown the ground beef and drain fat. Cook bacon, drain fat and crumble.
2. Add all ingredients to the slow cooker and cook on low for 8–10 hours.

Yield: 12 servings

Meets requirement for fruit/vegetable and protein/meat alternate

## Baked Peach Almond Oatmeal

Rolled oats .....	2 cups	Canola oil .....	3 Tbsp
Brown sugar.....	¼ cup	Vanilla extract.....	1 tsp
Salt .....	½ tsp	Almond extract.....	¼ tsp
Baking powder.....	1 tsp	Peaches or nectarines, chopped.....	2 cups
Cinnamon.....	1 tsp	Peaches or nectarines, sliced.....	1 cup
Almonds, chopped.....	½ cup		
Milk.....	2 cups		
Egg.....	1 large		

1. Preheat oven to 350° F. Grease an 8x8 square baking dish and set aside.
2. In a medium bowl, mix together the oats, brown sugar, baking powder, salt, cinnamon and almonds. In another medium bowl, whisk together the milk, egg, oil, vanilla and almond extract.
3. Arrange the chopped peaches on the bottom of the prepared baking dish. Pour the oat mixture evenly over the peaches. Pour the milk mixture over the oats. Gently shake the baking dish to make sure the milk covers the oats evenly. Arrange sliced peaches on top of the oatmeal.
4. Bake for 40 minutes, until the top is golden and oatmeal is set. Let cool for 5 minutes and serve warm.

Yield: 6 servings

Meets requirement for breads/grains and fruit/vegetable

— Adapted from: *twopeasandtheirpod.com*

## Activity Corner

### How Do You Like Your Eggs?



Cooking is fun and educational for pre-schoolers. Begin this activity with a story such as, *An Egg Is Quiet*, a marvelous children’s

book, written by Dianna Aston and illustrated by Sylvia Long. Talk about where the eggs we eat come from and what food products contain eggs, such as, pancakes, muffins and custard. Let the children help and watch as you prepare eggs in three different ways, hardboiled, sunny side up and scrambled. Let each child crack an egg and break it open into a bowl. Check for bits of shell after each one! For the scrambled eggs each child can have a turn beating the eggs with a fork or whisk. Peeling a hardboiled egg may be challenging but also a fun activity for children.

Eggs are an excellent source of high-quality protein and other nutrients. Enjoy the eggs for snack with slices of whole wheat toast. How do you like your eggs?

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**Food Q:** How do you make an apple turnover?  
**Funny A:** Roll it down a hill!