

## **Child obesity in Nigerian: Causes, health impacts and prevention**

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Childhood obesity is a complex health issue. It occurs when a child is well above the normal or healthy weight and height for his or her age. Overweight and obese children are likely to stay obese into adulthood and more likely to develop non-communicable diseases like diabetes and cardiovascular diseases at a younger age. The causes of excess weight gain in young people in Nigeria, are similar to those in adults and major factors are life style and genetics. Behaviors that have been observed to influence excess weight gain in Nigerian children, include high calorie, low-nutrient foods, increased portion size, over consumption of beverages, not getting enough physical activity, sedentary activities such as watching television or other screen devices, medication use, and sleep routines.

In contrast, consuming a healthy diet and being physically active can help children grow as well as maintain a healthy weight throughout childhood. Balancing energy or calories consumed from foods and beverages with the calories burned through activity plays a role in preventing excess weight. In addition, eating healthy and being physically active also has other health benefits and help to prevent chronic diseases such as cancers, neurological and renal disorders, as well as heart diseases later in life which are usually products of child obesity.

### **Biography**

Sis. (Dr) Evangeline Oparaocha a Nigerian of Imo State extraction joined the Department of Public Health Technology in September, 2004 as a senior lecturer. She rose to the rank of a Reader in October, 2008, and is awaiting the final approval of her promotion to a professor. From May 1997 to July 2004, she lectured in the Department of Biological Sciences of the Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Abia State, having taught for some years at Fatima College, Ikire, Osun State. Her postgraduate studies were done at the prestigious University of Ibadan, Nigeria, while her undergraduate studies were at the Rivers State, University of Science and Technology, Port Harcourt. In 2005 she went to Harvard School of Public Health for a certificate course in Ethical Issues in International Health Research. Her classical researches have been in the area of malaria control through the use of local herbs. Sr (Dr) Oparaocha has travelled extensively for conferences and workshops overseas and within the country. She is a happy and friendly nun and has won three awards from her students for academic excellence, hard work and integrity. Outside the academic world she is a poet, a musician and a dramatist.

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