

Children Burn More Calories After Low-Fat Meal

You may not realize it, but your children, and other people's children, are getting fatter. Obesity is the most common nutritional problem facing children in the United States. While countless theories abound as to the causes of (and solutions to) this dilemma, it is widely assumed that limiting the consumption of high-fat, high-calorie foods may be the most important factor.

While some believe that taking in excess calories leads to weight gain, others believe that not all calories are created equal. In a study designed to evaluate this latter premise, a group of obese and non-obese girls was given food with an equal amount of calories, but with different fat contents. Results indicated that fat storage was eight times higher after consuming a high-fat meal vs. a low-fat meal. Overall, children consuming low-fat foods used less than 50% of the fat they had consumed.

When the percentage of fat in the diet increases, the body can respond in two ways to maintain energy and fat balance: by using a larger amount of fat to maintain fat balance, or by breaking down the fat and getting rid of it as waste. Either way, diet composition is considered specific to the individual, and must be taken into account among the various risk factors that induce obesity in children.

Talk to your doctor about the specifics of a sensible diet for you and your children. It's never too early to start your kids on the path toward health and wellness.

Reference: Maffeis C, Schutz Y, Grezzani A, et al. Meal-induced thermogenesis and obesity: Is a fat meal a risk factor for fat gain in children? *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism* 2001: Vol. 86, No. 1, pp 214-218.

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