



# Obesity in America

## Overview:

Students will learn about the severity of the obesity epidemic in the United States and its consequences. Students will work together to come up with strategies for preventing obesity at school and at home.

## Objectives:

At the end of the lesson students will be able to:

-  **Explain** what causes obesity.
-  **List** strategies for preventing obesity.
-  **Explain** how reading ingredient labels is an important step in understanding what you eat.
-  **Describe** the benefits of eating whole foods.
-  **Brainstorm** a list of whole food choices available in the garden.

## Materials:

-  Handout 1: “Obesity in America”
-  Handout 2: “Take Charge”

## On the Board:

-  Vocabulary
-  Student Reflection Questions

## Suggested Snack:

-  Serve one of the “smart snack” ideas from Page 6 of the “Take Charge” handout.

## Vocabulary:

 obesity  
 calorie  
 epidemic  
 consume

 expend  
 diabetes  
 heart disease  
 kidney disease

 hypertension  
 adolescent  
 cancer  
 body mass index

## Learning Activities:

- I. Presentation: Obesity in America (10 min.)
  - A. Distribute the Handout: “Obesity in America.”
    - Tell students that today’s lesson will discuss the issue of obesity. Have them fill out the worksheet to stay engaged during the lecture/discussion.
  - B. Ask students to define *obesity*: the condition of being very overweight or, more technically, having a body mass index in the 95% percentile or higher. This means that a person has a body mass greater than 95% of people that are the same age and gender as them.
    - *Body mass index* is a weight-to-height ratio, calculated by dividing a person’s weight by their height squared. It is used as an indicator for underweight and obesity.

- C. Tell students that obesity is caused by an imbalance between calories consumed and calories expended. Have students break down this definition:
- How do you *consume* calories? (By eating or drinking.)
  - How do you *expend* calories? (Simply by being alive. Our bodies [our brains, heart, organs, digestive systems, etc.] use calories/energy to function. Also, you expend calories through physical activity.)
  - Recall from the lesson “Calories and Portion Sizes Around the World,” the average amount of calories needed per day for a teenager. (Approximately 2,000.)
  - Ask students to recall the definition of *calories*: a unit of measurement that measures energy.
  - What happens if you consume more calories than you expend? (Weight gain. Consistent weight gain over time can lead to obesity.)
- D. Tell students that 1/3 of children in Los Angeles County are obese. Ask students why they think this is a problem?
- Tell students that obesity is currently considered a public health *epidemic*: a rapid spread or increase in the occurrence of a disease.
  - Obesity can lead to more serious health complications like: diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease, hypertension and cancer.
  - All of these conditions can mean very expensive medical care for treatment.
  - People who are obese are much more likely to die earlier than people who maintain a healthy weight.
  - If someone is obese as a child or adolescent they are more likely to be obese as an adult.
2. Activity: Brainstorming on Obesity Prevention (2 min.)
- A. Break students into small groups.
- B. Ask students, based on the last six nutrition lessons, to brainstorm some strategies for preventing obesity.
- C. Write their answers on the board. Students should be able to come up with:
- Reading Nutrition Facts labels.
  - Avoiding foods that are high in saturated or trans fats.
  - Avoiding foods that are high in sugar.
  - Being careful to only eat one serving, instead of many.
  - Be mindful of how much you eat in the course of day, as well as how big your portions are.
  - Drinking water instead of soda.
  - Eating more home cooked foods, instead of at restaurants or from packages.

- Eating lots of fruits and vegetables.
  - Staying active.
- A. Distribute the Handout “Take Charge” from [choosemyplate.gov](http://choosemyplate.gov). Tell students that this sums up everything they have covered in these nutrition lessons and is a great guide to keep in order to help them take charge of their own health.
3. **Snack:** Serve one of the “smart snack” ideas from Page 6 of the “Take Charge” handout. (5 min.)
4. Have students answer the reflection questions in their garden journals. (5 min.)

### Student Reflection Questions:

1. After these lessons, what are some new healthy habits you could form to take charge of your health?
2. List the necessary steps you will need to take to adopt these new habits in your daily routine.

### Assessment Questions:

1. List three strategies for preventing obesity.
  - Read nutrition facts labels.
  - Avoid foods that are high in saturated or trans fats.
  - Avoid foods that are high in sugar.
  - Be careful to only eat one serving, instead of many.
  - Be mindful of how much you eat in the course of a day, as well as how big your portions are.
  - Drink water instead of soda.
  - Eat more home cooked foods, instead of at restaurants or from packages.
  - Eat lots of fruits and vegetables.
  - Stay physically active.
2. What is the most accurate definition of obesity?
  - A. Eating too much every day
  - B. Being in a general state of unhealthiness
  - C. **The condition of being very overweight or, more technically, having a body mass index in the 95% percentile or higher**

### Standards:

- **Comprehension and Collaboration:**  
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

**Craft and Structure:**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-8.4

Determine the meaning of symbols, key terms, and other domain-specific words and phrases as they are used in a specific scientific or technical context relevant to grades 6-8 texts and topics.