

Weekly Paragraph:

Who is responsible for children's health?

It's lunch time and sixth grader Oscar Villanova visits the vending machine. He pays for an orange juice and some cheese sticks, but he really wanted soda and chips. His school, Mildred Avenue, only sells school lunch and healthy snacks.

Seventh-grader LaTisha Brown has diabetes. Her doctor says exercise will help her control the disease, but at school she only gets gym class one day per week.

Many children suffer from health conditions that are caused or made worse by their lifestyle. The number of US children who are overweight or obese has doubled since the 1970's. Rates of childhood diabetes have also risen. These conditions can put children at risk for heart disease and other major killers later in life.

These health issues are multidimensional problems, with many different causes. Eating meals out, watching lots of TV, and staying inside after school can cause too much weight gain. But there are many things children can do to improve their health. Doctors say the primary steps children should take are eating healthy food and getting exercise every day.

Schools are getting involved in solving the problem. Some, like Mildred Avenue, restrict the snacks students can buy. Others are offering more gym classes to emphasize the importance of exercise. But some people say parents should take responsibility for teaching children healthy behavior.

Who is responsible for watching children's and teenager's health? Is it young people and their families or should the schools also be involved?

Focus Word Definitions

- » obesity - a state of being very overweight
- » multidimensional - having many different sides or characteristics
- » primary - most important; most influential
- » restrict - to keep within limits
- » emphasize - to show or raise the importance of