

The Role Of Dietary Fiber In The Development And Treatment Of Childhood Obesity

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For children, fiber administration should be considered as an adjuvant therapy rather than a primary modality, because fiber might aid in promoting satiety during meals and curbing hunger between meals.

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Childhood obesity is viewed as a public health problem in the United States because of its assumed high prevalence and increasing secular trend. The best estimate of the genetic contribution to obesity ranges from 5% to 25%. Environmental factors play a major role in obesity development. Low income and a low level of education have been associated with obesity, particularly among white women. Caloric intake as a risk factor for **obesity** has not been clearly established. This lack of a clear-cut association may be attributable to the problem of accurately measuring caloric intake. Several studies have linked increased total fat intake, rather than caloric intake, with obesity. Some studies have linked television viewing to **obesity** in children.

Obesity is rare among the populations of developing countries, where dietary **fiber** intake is high. Explanations for the role of dietary **fiber** in **obesity** include a reduced caloric density of the foods, a slower rate of food ingestion, and possible effects on satiety. Most studies on the role of **fiber** in the treatment of **obesity** have been somewhat limited by lack of comparison groups, inadequate sample sizes, and short durations of the observations. However, although limited, the available evidence suggests that **fiber** potentially could play a useful role in weight reduction.

More research is needed, however, to assess further the efficacy of high-**fiber** diets in the treatment of childhood **obesity**. For now, however, increasing dietary **fiber** as a part of a health-promoting dietary pattern presents an attractive public health possibility as a means for prevention of chronic diseases. Preventing childhood **obesity** could be a part of the health benefit resulting from a population-based recommendation for optimal **fiber** intake.