



ACPeds Parent Talk

Keeping parents up to date on the latest news in child and teen health



Weight Watchers: Teens, Obesity and Eating Disorders

On February 7th, Weight Watchers announced¹ that the company would be offering free summer memberships to teens aged 13 to 17.

While some reacted positively to the news, citing Weight Watchers as the reason their weight and eating habits changed for the better, **many responded with criticism, attacking the company for using a marketing ploy to take advantage of teens struggling with their weight.**

To name a few, the New York Post², Psychology Today³, and The Washington Post⁴, among many others⁵, published articles criticizing Weight Watchers and calling their motives into question. The company had this to say in response:



Weight Watchers

@WeightWatchers

6:46 PM - 10 Feb 2018

Earlier this week, we shared the future vision of Weight Watchers, including some changes we are making to bring health and wellness to all, not just the few. As part of that, we announced we would open WW to teens for free. We hear you NEDA and we take our responsibility seriously. We know that the teenage years are a critical life stage and opening WW to teens with consent from a parent/guardian is about families getting healthier. What we will be providing for teens is a program that guides healthy habits for life, not a diet. We have and will continue to talk with healthcare professionals as we get ready to launch this program.



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According to the American Heart Association⁶, **about 1 in 3 American Children are either overweight or obese** and that number is only expected to rise in the near future. With so many children struggling with unhealthy weight, it would seem that offering teens a membership to a weight loss program could be a benefit to many.



On the flip side, according to statistics from the [National Association of Anorexia Nervosa](#)⁷, **at least 30 million people of all ages suffer from an eating disorder in the U.S.**

With about 300 million people living in the United States, that's about 10% of Americans! Worse yet, those numbers are thought to be significantly underestimated because so few people actually seek treatment for eating disorders.

THE DANGERS OF WEIGHT-BASED TEASING AND DIET TALK AT HOME

Family weight teasing predicts:



binge eating



weight gain



extreme weight control measures

Parental weight talk—**either encouraging a child to diet or speaking about their own diet**—is linked to the development of both eating disorders and overweight in the child.

Whether or not Weight Watchers has good intentions by offering this free membership to teens we can't be certain. But **one thing is for sure: many children in the United States are not only suffering from a lack of nutrition**, they may also lack healthy eating habits and a basic understanding of the phrase "food is fuel for the body."

The last thing we as a society, especially parents and health professionals, want to do is reinforce the unhealthy mindset that weight is the focus when in reality, health should be the focus.

HOW TO FOSTER HEALTHY ATTITUDES ABOUT FOOD AND WEIGHT AMONG CHILDREN



focus on healthy habits, discourage dieting and avoid "weight talk"



promote positive body image



encourage more frequent family meals



ask kids about their experiences with bullying

Children need to know that they are loved and valuable and precious regardless of their weight. They also need to know that eating is a natural experience that can and should be enjoyed--healthily and in moderation.

For more information

- [Healthy Eating](#)⁸ - ACPeds Patient Information Handout
- [Obesity: Causes, Prevention & Resources for Parents](#)⁹ - ACPeds Parent Talk
- [Eating Disorders & Physical Activity](#)¹⁰ - ACPeds Parent Talk
- [How to Have a Healthy Family Table](#)¹¹ - ACPeds Patient Information Handout



Talking to Kids About Tragedies

#WeeklyBlogPost

Whether it's the recent shootings in [Las Vegas](#)¹², [Texas](#)¹³, or [Florida](#)¹⁴, or natural disasters like the [California wildfires](#)¹⁵ and [Hurricane Irma](#)¹⁶, there are some troubling things going on in the world today.

When these kinds of tragedies come up, how can we help our kids cope?



For research-backed recommendations on how to talk to your kids about tragedies in the world,

[CLICK HERE](#)¹⁷ and please, leave a comment!

We love to hear from our readers and hope to receive your feedback!

Check [ACPeds.org/Blog](#)¹⁸ each Monday & Friday for a new post. Visit [www.acped.org/subscribe](#)¹⁹ to subscribe to the blog and click [here](#)²⁰ to subscribe to the Parent Talk newsletter.



Don't hesitate to contact us with your questions and comments. We look forward to hearing from you.

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