

## Social Studies lesson plan

### Our Challenge—A Look at the Obesity Epidemic in America

**Quick summary:** Students will research the obesity epidemic in America, examine the potential impact (present and future) of the issue and prepare a short report on their findings.

**How long will it take:** 45 minutes

**What do I need:** newspapers/magazines or computers with internet access.

#### How does it work:

Begin by asking students why they think obesity is more of a problem in the U.S. today than ever before. How have our lives and habits changed that may have contributed to the problem?

#### Potential discussion points include:

- We're less active than ever before (we drive cars, have jobs that don't require us to be up and moving, technological advances require us to do less, advent of TV/computer/video games).
- We eat out more than ever before (cost of food, schedules, working parents).
- What we're eating is different (serving sizes are bigger than ever, less nutritious foods).
- Poll the class to ask students how widespread they think the obesity epidemic is in the U.S. How many Americans do they think are overweight? How many kids?
- Using newspapers, magazines or internet news service have students research current event articles about the obesity epidemic. (This could also be given as a homework assignment to have students bring in one article on the obesity epidemic.) Students should prepare a paragraph on their research findings.

**FOR A TWIST:** Have students prepare an oral report to present to the class or the next PTA meeting or meeting of your School Wellness Council.

**Give students the following questions to guide their research. Encourage students to answer some or all of these questions with their report:**

- 1.** What is the definition of obesity?  
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- 2.** How many obese Americans are there today compared to 10 years ago? 20 years? 30 years?  
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- 3.** What is the trend projected to do in the future (increase, decrease, stay the same)?  
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- 4.** Will the high rates of obesity have any impact on our healthcare system?  
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- 5.** What are people saying is the solution to the obesity problem?  
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- 6.** Are certain people more likely to be obese than others?  
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- 7.** How many kids are obese?  
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- 8.** How did the rates of obesity they found in their research compare with the poll that was taken at the beginning of the lesson?

**Discussion questions:**

- 1.** Based on what you learned, do you think the obesity epidemic is important? Why?  
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- 2.** How does the obesity epidemic impact individuals and the country as a whole?  
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- 3.** Compare the obesity epidemic to other health epidemics in U.S. history. Are there similarities or differences to polio, Spanish influenza (flu), malaria or the increase in cancers?  
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- 4.** What can students do to help?

**Lesson Extension:**

Have students write a one-page paper about:

- 1.** What they learned from the discussion  
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- 2.** What they can do now to stay fit and healthy  
.....
- 3.** What they can do in the future to live a stronger, longer life