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Tomorrow is the traditional time to make New Year's resolutions, where we resolve to make beneficial changes in our lives. I'd like to give you something to think about. We are witnessing an explosion of obesity in the US, and our community is no exception. More than two-thirds of American adults are either overweight or obese. Adult obesity rates alone have more than doubled — from 15% in 1980 to almost 35% this year. By the way, this is a global problem with Mexico, China and India fast on our heels.

In the past 30 years, childhood obesity has quadrupled for our 12 to 19 year old adolescents and almost tripled for our 6 to 11 year olds. 17% of our children and adolescents are obese. I was teaching at EHS 30 years ago and, to be very honest, I don't remember any of my students being obese. If I go back 55 years I can name the two friends I knew who were obese in high school and I attended three different schools.

So what's the big deal about obesity? Awhile back I made a comment about chronic disease, well it starts when you're young. In a population-based sample of 5 to 19-year-olds, 70% of the obese youth had at least one risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Obese adolescents are more likely to have prediabetes, a condition in which blood glucose levels indicate a high risk for the development of full-blown adult onset type 2 diabetes.

But type 2 diabetes isn't just for adults anymore. The number of children and adolescents with the condition (most of whom are diagnosed in their early teens) has skyrocketed within the last 20 years, prompting the journal "Diabetes Care" to call it an "emerging epidemic."

In 2005, a landmark paper was published in The New England Journal of Medicine suggesting that, based upon morbidity and mortality trends that are occurring in our society right now, children born today may be the first in the history of the United States to have mean average life expectancy lower than that of their parents.

Children and adolescents who are obese are likely to be obese as adults and are, therefore, more at risk for adult health problems such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, renal failure, osteoporosis, stroke and several types of cancer. So it's not just us older folks who are impacting our health and not living our extended lives to the fullest. We're passing a lifestyle on to our children and grandchildren that is already having a negative impact on their lives.

Something isn't right and it cannot be blamed solely on too many calories and too little exercise. My New Year's resolution is to research what science has uncovered about obesity and see if I can condense it down for future community comments.