

Obesity in the US is a growing epidemic not only in adults but in children. They're not eating enough critical nutrients needed in their daily diets nor are they getting the recommended amount of physical activity per day. I've often asked the question what can be done about this. The obvious answers are to eat healthier and exercise more but I never realized until now just how much I can do at my age; I can speak out for those who are too afraid to say what they should. Speaking out will let the community know what should be done to improve it. One place I can start speaking out about is nutrition and physical activity needs.

Nutrition plays a big role to decrease obesity chances. One thing families should do is stock up on more fruits and vegetables. Families will have healthier choices and have more needed nutrients in their diets. When they stock up on fruits and veggies, they limit their sugar intake. By reducing the amount of sugary items, like soda and sweets, it will be easier to choose a healthier snack. Also people should buy leaner meats like fish and turkey. Leaner meats don't contain as much fat thereby reducing the amount of grease that will build up in a pan. Many Americans should also decrease the times they eat out. Most of us tend to eat out on almost a regular basis when we should only be eating out once or twice a week and even then we could only go on occasions. It might be easier to go to a restaurant and let someone else cook but we end up with fattening consequences. An appetizer can easily add 500+ calories. So can a split dessert. Bentonville High School should get rid of the ice cream selections. They're already serving pudding or cakes so why should there be even more desserts. Everyone only needs one. They should also add more fat free choices. They could add onto the salad bar since it's so tiny compared to what it could be. They could use whole grains in pizza or breads and the cafeteria staff could also make sure every student has a milk and fruit. Teens are low in calcium intake so making sure each student has milk can increase their calcium needs and fruit can provide other nutrient intake.

Exercise may seem like a chore for most of us Americans. We've become lazy over the years since technology has advanced greatly. Families can make some easy adjustments to their activity needs. For instance, some families have a Wii. If affordable, they can get the Wii Fit and start those workout programs begin with. However, I know that other families don't get the same privilege as others. Another option would

be a family work-out day or hour. On a specific day or hour the family can get together and go for a run or create a fun work-out routine for the family to enjoy. Making a family work-out into a family fun night can make exercising much more enjoyable. Even if the family works out together for 15 or 20 minutes a day can improve activity needs greatly. The family can also cut back on TV and have a game like Twister. TV is getting in the way of physical needs because of reality shows which people love to watch. Decreasing the amount of time watching TV can be increasing the time into fun and memorable times. At the high school, physical needs for students can be improved everywhere by simple suggestions. Bentonville High School requires only a semester for P.E. and this should be a required full year. If they're so concerned about student needs, they should enforce students to take a full year of P.E. Back in elementary schools, they had Fun-and-Field days. High school students and many adults love to relive their childhood. Why not bring back a simple memory of Fun-and-Field day? The school could even have certain clubs sponsor a fun-and-field day to help raise funds or just have a memorable day for hundreds of people. Let's not forget that students love to compete. Why not have basketball shooting, running, or weight lifting contests every month or two? Students can prepare for these contests by working on their skills which leads to more physical activity. Such simple ideas can create an overall improvement for everyone.

Nutritional and physical activity needs are, possibly, at an all time high. Simple changes in a home and school can ultimately lead to a greater community. By correcting small yet significant mistakes in our nutritional and physical diets, we can start to build a better nation. Writing this essay has made it clear to me; it's not about what I can do to improve my family and school. It's about what we can do.