

- [Home](#)
- [SF STAT!](#)
- [Current Articles](#)
- [CURRENT ISSUE](#)
- [Online Newspapers](#)
- [WEEKLY NEWSLETTERS](#)
- [Media Kit](#)
- [Calendar](#)
- [Business Directory](#)
- [Video Interviews](#)
- [Contact](#)

Select Page

New Guidelines Issued to Treat Obesity in Children

January 25, 2023 – The American Academy of Pediatrics recently issued updated guidelines for treating children and teens with obesity. Currently, more than 14.4 million children and teens in the United States live with the chronic disease. “After reading the guidelines, I was really struck by how much work and effort went into formulating them,” said Roy Kim, MD, pediatric endocrinologist for Cleveland Clinic Children’s.

“They took a really thoughtful approach into first, not just understanding the biological dimension of obesity, which is very complicated and which we’ve learned a lot about. But,

also the social dimension.” Dr. Kim said the previous guidelines had not been updated since 2007. So, what are the new changes? Comprehensive obesity treatment now includes nutrition support, physical activity treatment and behavioral therapy. In addition to medications and metabolic and bariatric surgery – all of which have been proven to be safe and effective.

The academy noted that only teens who are 13 and older with severe obesity should be evaluated for those types of surgeries. Dr. Kim said there also seems to be more of a focus on the social support component of treating childhood obesity and that’s extremely important. “Obesity is really highly dependent on the social environment in which we live, and that includes our family and household structure, but also, the social environment of our neighborhoods, schools and recreational areas.

So they really took all of that into account,” he said. The academy said the updated guidelines do not discuss obesity prevention, which will be addressed in another forthcoming policy statement.

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