

Study: Parents in denial about kids' obesity

By Cari Romm, Atlantic

There's a certain type of parental pride that grows from just the right combination of willful ignorance, unflagging optimism, and impressive mental gymnastics. Junior's latest report card was less than stellar? Well, yes—he's so smart that school just bores him. Little League game spent on the bench? The coach probably doesn't realize the talent he has on his hands.

But that usually harmless denial can also manifest itself in a more significant—and more damaging—way, according to a new study in the *Journal of the American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*. Specifically, the study lent more support to the notion that parents of obese children often fail to see their kids' weight as unhealthy, even after a doctor's diagnosis.

Researchers from the University of California San Diego and Brown University surveyed parents of first-time patients at a pediatric obesity clinic, assessing the families' willingness to help their children lose weight. The patients, who ranged in age from 5 to 20, had all been classified as overweight or clinically obese, and most had been referred to the clinic for treatment by their regular pediatricians.

The majority of parents, 93.5 percent, correctly recognized that their children were, in fact, overweight or obese—but nearly 30 percent said they didn't see their children's weight as a problem, and roughly the same number rated their children's health as "very good" or "excellent."

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