

The Effects of Hunger on Children

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Overview

Most people dislike feeling hunger and kids are no exception. The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines hunger as a physiological state of discomfort resulting from a chronic shortage of food intake. Hunger has been linked to disease, pain, physical weakness, anxiety and death. With over 40 percent of households living below the poverty level in the United States, many children are affected by hunger. Approximately 13 million American children live with or are at risk of experiencing hunger. Because childhood represents such a critical period in human development, the long-term impact of hunger on children can be extremely detrimental.

Hunger Hits Physically

Good nutrition has a direct link to proper physical growth and development for kids. Children who experience chronic, unsatisfied hunger are at risk of not getting the appropriate intake of necessary vitamins and minerals to ensure reaching developmental milestones. A child might be shorter than average height and could be significantly underweight. Some kids succumb to common childhood diseases because hunger lowers immunity necessary for warding off illnesses. Kids suffering from hunger often have poorer overall physical health.

Cognitive Effects of Hunger

Your youngster's cognitive development might suffer from hunger. Children experiencing chronic hunger could develop learning disabilities or other cognitive impairments. Many kids will have trouble focusing in an academic setting due to a lack of energy and motivation. A hungry child often has ongoing health issues, so he may have frequent school absences that also make it difficult to learn. Your hungry child might fall behind in grade levels.