

BEACON STREET GIRLS

Lake Rescue Update



Reading Beacon Street Girls Books Can Help Obese Kids Lose Weight

Important News Update: In the first study to look at the impact of age-appropriate literature on obese adolescents, researchers at **Duke Children's Hospital** discovered that reading the right type of novel may make a difference. The results were presented on October 4 at the **Obesity Society** annual meeting in Phoenix, Arizona.

Researchers asked obese females ages 9 to 13 who were enrolled in Duke's Healthy Lifestyles weight-loss program to read *Lake Rescue* from the Beacon Street Girls book series. *Lake Rescue* had been crafted with the aid of experts to include specific nutrition, exercise, healthy lifestyle and weight management guidance, as well as positive messages and strong role models.

After 6 months, researchers found the girls who read *Lake Rescue* experienced a significant decrease in their Body Mass Index (BMI), when compared to a group of girls who hadn't read the book, as well as a control group reading a second book. (Because kids are still growing BMI is the most accurate measure of a healthy weight.) In a surprising development, the control group read *Charlotte in Paris*, another Beacon Street Girls book, and also had positive results, losing more weight than non-readers but not as much as *Lake Rescue* readers.

Background: The Beacon Street Girls books and website address a multitude of issues – ranging from friendship and social issues to divorce, lying, and cyber-bullying. Research and advice from top experts (from Duke, Harvard, Children's Hospital, Boston) is blended into our entertaining books and website. *Lake Rescue* incorporates advice from Dr. Lilian Cheung D.Sc., R.D. Harvard School of Public Health; Mavis Jukes—teacher and best-selling author: *Be Healthy! It's a Girl Thing: Food, Fitness, and Feeling Great*; Catherine Steiner-Adair— Ed.D., Clinical Instructor, department of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School and co-author of *Full of Ourselves: A Wellness Curriculum to Advance Girl Power, Health & Leadership*; and Jill Zimmerman Rutledge, M.S.W.—and author of *Dealing With the Stuff That Makes Life Tough: The Ten Things That Stress Girls Out and How to Deal With Them*.

The Problem: According to the CDC, over the past three decades the childhood obesity rate has more than doubled for preschool children and adolescents (ages 12-19 years) and has more than tripled for children aged 6-11 years. The most recent NHANES data (2003–2004) shows that approximately 18 percent of children aged 6 to 19 years old are overweight. Meanwhile, more than \$1.6 billion in marketing expenditures are directed to adolescents by the major food and beverage brands, often promoting processed and fast food.

Bottom Line: Of course, this is a preliminary study. Further research is needed to gain a better understanding of whether the books will have a similar impact outside an organized weight-loss program. But, this kind of proof around a non-invasive obesity intervention could have a major impact on how doctors and nutrition professionals deal with overweight and obese children. The only other *proven* options for weight-loss are surgery and medications.

Meanwhile, as one expert says, "Unlike medication, there are no side effects here. Reading doesn't hurt anyone. Meanwhile, while we know there is no such thing as miracle weight-loss the sub-conscious life-style changes made by girls who read the Beacon Street Girls books will have durable effects on their lives."

The Bigger Picture: Over the years, parents have told us that our books have had a profound effect on their daughters. Girls have told us that they knew what to do in a certain situation because the Beacon Street Girls had paved the way for them. But never before have we had proof that a child changed their behavior based on one of our books. This study indicates that the Beacon Street Girls are more than just a fun and entertaining book series. The Beacon Street Girls really can help girls navigate adolescence.



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