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According to a new survey released today, young parents remain unaffected by Government concerns about spiralling child obesity and instead worry more about their child becoming ill than anything else. Over half of parents 18-24 surveyed say that their primary concern is that their child should fall ill (56%) or be bullied at school (26%). Not one young parent questioned says that they are worried about child obesity.

The survey, specially commissioned by Great Ormond Street Hospital and Dorling Kindersley to mark the publication of new book *Baby & Child Health* shows that the government has much work to do in halting the current "unprecedented obesity epidemic" (The Observer, 9th November 2003). Other interesting findings include:

- An overwhelming 58% of people surveyed claim that their child is aware or concerned about their own image.
- Over half of parents surveyed say that concern about issues such as bullying were the most difficult / stressful aspects of parenting (51%), and of equal concern to both fathers and mothers.
- Older parents feel that experimentation with cigarettes and alcohol worries them most, with the majority of the over 35+ age group saying this remains biggest worry.
- The majority of people say that their GP would be their first port of call for advice on their child's health / development (44%), with many saying that their parents (18%) and a reference book (18%) would also be a valuable source of guidance. The older 55+ generation favour the trusted advice of their GP (66%), whereas younger parents turn to their parents for advice on childcare (36%).
- According to over half parents surveyed, time for yourself is most likely to be lost or given lowest priority in a busy week, followed by sleep (21%) and time with your partner (19%). Women most miss "me-time" with almost 60% saying that this often gets sacrificed due to family demands.
- 70% of parents surveyed said that their morals and ideas (and those of their partner's) are the biggest influence on the way they bring up their children; 10% find that the state of their finances is the biggest influence.
- The two aspects of baby care that parents find most stressful are diagnosis of illness (38%) and development (38%). Sleeping (13%) and feeding (10%) are also cause for concern.
- Parents find that the period from birth to 6 months is the most stressful period of parenthood (29%); followed by 11-15 years (24%), 15-18 years (16%) and 1-3 years (14%). Young parents in particular find the first few years of their child's life the most stressful, whilst parents of 55+ find the period from 11-18 the most difficult.

Dr Jane Collins of Great Ormond Street Hospital says, "I wasn't surprised that parents worry so much about their children becoming ill. Obesity is a big problem and we are storing up problems for the future. We need to understand why it isn't concerning people. Maybe parents just don't know what to do about it."

For further information on this survey or *Baby & Child Health*, contact Serena Stent tel: 020 7010 3553 or by email, serena.stent@dk.com

Note to Editors:

- Over 1,100 parents of all ages and from 16 TV regions took part in this survey.
- Survey carried out by Great Ormond Street Hospital and Dorling Kindersley to mark the publication of **Baby & Child Health**.
- **GOSH** is one of the world's leading children's hospitals. Founded in 1852 with only 10 beds, it now has a worldwide reputation for clinical excellence and treats more than 90,000 children a year. GOSH works in partnership with the Institute of Child Health in London and together they conduct pioneering research into child health and welfare as well as the treatment of childhood illness.
- **Dr Jane Collins** became Chief Executive of Great Ormond Street Hospital NHS Trust, London in September 2001, having previously been medical director in the same organisation. Dr Jane Collins also writes an immensely popular weekly column in The Times on child health in which she answers readers' questions on a diverse range of topics including behaviour problems, healthy eating, relationships and childhood illnesses. One of the secrets of her success is that she never forgets that parents are only human and that they, too, have their needs.
- **Baby & Child Health** is available from all good bookshops and www.dk.com, and Great Ormond Street Hospital receives a royalty for every copy sold.

Regional Variations:

- For people in **Newcastle and the Tyne Tees** area, 25% said they would ask their parents for advice
- The **Welsh**, more than any other group, turn to reference books for help with 23% saying this is their first point of advice for child health care.
- The Internet is also a good resource for health care. 19% of people in **East Anglia** use it to help with looking and caring for their children.
- The biggest worries when it comes to their child getting ill are people in the **West country** (49%)
- Parents in **Northern Ireland** are most concerned that their children will experiment with cigarettes and alcohol. (41%)
- Concern or future concern about issues that kids face such as bullying are found to be most difficult things to cope with as a parent. 64% of people in **Lancashire** said that this was indeed their biggest concern.
- Unsurprisingly, parents give up time for themselves when children arrive on the scene. 58% of people in the **Midlands** sacrifice time for themselves for their children. A further 20% of people in that region give up their sleep.
- The survey found that 83% of parents in the **West Country** think that their children are aware of their own image. The national average was 58%.
- 77% of parents in **Scotland** felt that their own morals and ideas was the biggest influence in their children's upbringing. For 27% of people in the **Midlands** the biggest influence on the way they bring up their children was their own childhood.
- Unsurprisingly the most stressful period of parenthood is from birth to 6 months old. Regionally it was the **Scottish** who were most concerned with **40%** saying this was their most stressful period.