

HealthyActions

Achieving Your Goals for Healthy Living



Obesity in Children: An Epidemic

Being overweight or obese is when a child weighs more than what is considered healthy for their height and body type.²

What Are the Risks of Being Obese?

An obese child is more likely to be an obese adult. An obese child is also at risk for²:

- Heart disease
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Breathing problems
- Sleeping problems

The problem of children becoming overweight or obese has doubled since the 1970s.¹ Being overweight is serious and can affect the health of your child now and in the future.¹ Overweight kids are more likely to be overweight adults.²

Is Your Child Overweight?

If your child has gained a few extra pounds, it does not mean your child is obese.² A child is not considered obese until their weight is 10% higher than what is recommended for their height and body type.² Talk to your doctor about how much your child should weigh.

What Causes Your Child to be Overweight or Obese?

Some reasons for being overweight include²:

- Poor eating habits and/or overeating
- Not being active enough
- Family history of gaining weight/obesity
- Medical illness and/or medications
- Stressful life events like (divorce, death, abuse)
- Low self-esteem and/or depression

How Can You Help Your Child to Lose Weight or Stay at a Healthy Weight?

Make meals and snacks that are lower in fat.

Cut down on fried foods. Serve broiled, baked, or grilled fish, skinless chicken, or skinless turkey. Cook lean beef or pork; trim off fat. Use nonfat or lowfat milk and cheese. Use nonstick sprays for cooking.

Give your child 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day.³

Cut down on chips, cookies, candy, soda, and other high-fat or high-sugar foods. Offer snacks of fruits, vegetables, or low-fat yogurt instead.



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How Can I Help My Child Lose Weight?

Take a family approach to conquer obesity! This is a great time to get your whole family to eat healthy foods and be more active. Don't single out your overweight child.

Eat healthy and be more active as a family.²

Try serving your child different foods.

It could take 10 or more tries for a child to eat a new food.⁴ Make sure your child eats a range of food from these food groups⁵:

- Grains: bread, pasta, cereal, rice. On bread and cereal labels, look for the word “whole” as in “whole wheat” or “whole grain.” Other whole grains are brown rice, oatmeal, and popcorn.
- Vegetables
- Fruits
- Fat-free or low-fat dairy.
- Meat, beans, fish, and nuts. This group includes nuts and seeds, eggs, peanut butter, tofu, dry beans and peas (like black beans, black-eyed peas, and falafel).

Try a “make-over” on family favorites. Maybe you can use chicken or black beans instead of beef. You can bake instead of fry. Try to limit take-out food, fast food, and frozen dinners. Plan to cook healthy meals with your child.

Serve smaller amounts.

Practice healthy habits with your child. Read food labels together when you shop. Serve your child smaller amounts at meals. Your child can ask for more if she or he is still hungry.⁴ Your doctor can tell you how many servings of each food group your child should have. It will depend on the age of your child.

Help your child to get active.

Children should get 1 hour of exercise a day. This can be broken up throughout the day.⁴ Find activities your child enjoys. Cut down on the amount of time your child spends watching TV and playing video games.

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