

Preventing Childhood Obesity

Childhood obesity is an epidemic. More and more children are becoming obese.

Obesity now affects nearly 18% of all children and adolescents in the United States.

Since 1980, the number has almost tripled.

Obesity leads to high blood pressure, high cholesterol, type two diabetes, respiratory problems, and heart disease. All of these can lead to early death.

Is Your Child Overweight?



- Children need to be taught healthy habits early. Childhood obesity, like most obesity, is caused by an unhealthy diet and not enough physical activity.
- Body Mass Index is a method used to estimate body fat. BMI will define someone underweight, normal weight, overweight, or obese. It bases this measurement on how much someone typically should weigh for their height.
- The best way to find BMI is to use an online calculator.
- A child is considered overweight if his/her BMI is greater than 25.
- Remember, you should always check with a doctor about your child's weight if you think he/she is overweight.

What To Do

- Overweight children should not be put on a restricted calorie diet unless approved and supervised by a doctor.
- A diet too restricted may cause problems in the child's growth and development.
- You can change the types of food they eat. Incorporate more fruits and vegetables into their diet.
- For most young children who are diagnosed as overweight, the best method is to try to maintain their current weight as they grow in height. With an increase in height, the weight will balance out.

Prevention

➤ Physical activity

- Make time for family physical activities. When a child stays active with the family, it is more fun for them.
- Limit time spent in front of the television. Try to limit TV time to less than 2 hours a day.
- Children should be physically active for at least 60 minutes a day.
- The more time spent moving, the better.



➤ Healthy Diet

- Limit snacking. Only allow for a small snack a couple times a day.
- Make healthy snacks like fruit or cheese and crackers.
- Buy fewer junk food items and fill the house with healthy food.
- Do not completely keep sweet treats away from your child. Enjoying something sweet can be okay as long as it is in moderation. Allow them to have something sweet a few times a week.
- Eat meals together as a family.



START EARLY

From the time your child is born, plan to promote and surround him/her with a healthy lifestyle. Help your child learn healthy habits before the unhealthy ones.

Live like you want your child to live. Your child will model what you do, so if you want him/her to be more active and eat better, you should do the same.