

# Weight Management and How to Prevent Childhood Obesity

The purpose of this brochure is to provide parents with educational material to help manage their child's body weight with simple suggestions and easy lifestyle changes.



## **Common Misconceptions**

"It's just baby fat...he'll grow out of it."

"He's just husky."

"She has big bones."

"She's built just like me."

**IMPORTANT:** If your child is becoming overweight between the ages of 2 and 5, it is not normal. After age 5, obesity is something to watch.

## Is My Child's Weight Normal?

Health care providers use a tool called the **Body Mass Index** (BMI). BMI is the relationship between weight and height and it is calculated using weight and height. After the BMI is calculated, it is plotted on a BMI curve that is gender and age specific. The score is normal between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 95<sup>th</sup> percentile.

$$\text{BMI} = ( \text{Weight in Pounds} / ( \text{Height in inches} )^2 ) \times 703$$

You can visit the Center for Disease Control Web site:  
<http://www.cdc.gov/growthcharts> to download BMI charts.

## Who is at Risk?

- Families with low income level
- Parents with low education level
- Children whose BMI increases starting under age 5
- Parental obesity
- Ethnicity (African American, Mexican American)
- Medications (Steroids)

## Complications of Obesity in Children

- High cholesterol
- High blood pressure
- Insulin resistant (possibly progressing to diabetes)
- Gallstones
- Fatty liver disease
- Difficulty breathing
- Increased pressure on the brain
- Hip and back problems

The Mypyramid is a new guide that helps people to choose a variety of foods as well as the correct amount. This is a breakdown of food groups and items to focus on.



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| Grains  | Vegetables  | Fruits  | Milk  | Meat and Beans  |
| Make half your grains whole.  | Vary your veggies.  | Focus on fruits.  | Get your calcium-rich foods.  | Go lean with protein.   |

### Portion sizes

**Grains:** 6 ounces every day (6-11 servings), a serving of whole grains is about the size of a CD

**Vegetables:** 2 1/2 cups every day (3-5 servings), 1 cup is the size of a baseball, a medium potato is the size of a computer mouse

**Fruits:** 1 1/2 cups every day (2-4 servings), 1 cup is the size of a yo-yo

**Milk:** 3 cups every day (2-3 servings), four stacked dice is a serving of cheese

**Meat and Beans:** 5 ounces every day (2-3 servings), 1 serving equals the palm of your hand or a deck of cards (3oz)

### Food Related Suggestions

- **Eat out less.** This may be a challenge given hectic lifestyle, but you should try to limit it to no more than once per week.
- **Realize that by necessity most children eat at least one meal per day outside the home.** Many eat both breakfast and lunch at school. It's preferable for children to eat breakfast at home and to pack a lunch for school. This way, you know what your child is eating and you can try to ensure at least some nutritious meals. Be aware that money you give your child to buy lunch at school may actually be spent on a soda and snack food from a vending machine.

- **Encourage your children to eat with their friends at your house.** Many kids get together after school and on weekends and eat together. If you encourage your child to invite friends to your house, you'll know where your child is and that he or she is eating healthy food.
- **Help your kids make choices when they do go out.** Unless you tell them, they may not know that when they eat at McDonald's, they can order a Grilled Chicken Caesar Salad with dressing and 1% milk (500 calories). Instead of ordering a quarter pounder with cheese, medium soda and French fries (1,070) calories.
- **Encourage your child to be involved in school, after-school, and community activities.** Volunteering for anything can help boost self-worth.
- **Try to be more involved in your child's life.** Encourage him or her to get good grades and to talk frequently about school.

### **Meal Planning Tips**

- **Try to plan at least 1 week in advance.** If you don't, once meal time approaches you'll likely decide on what to eat and fix it as quickly as possible, which in most cases isn't healthy.
- **Involve other family members, including children in planning meals.** When you involve children in this process and offer choices, they are more likely to eat the foods that are provided.
- **Read food labels.** Look at the products nutritional value, the serving size, and what in the food.

### **What is Physical Activity?**

-Any activity that involves moving the body. Examples include: walking, gardening, briskly pushing a baby stroller, climbing the stairs, playing soccer, or dancing.

### **Types of Physical Activity**

**Aerobic activities** – speeds heart rate and breathing and improves heart and lung fitness. Examples are brisk walking, jogging, and swimming.

**Resistance, strength building, and weight-bearing activities** – helps build and maintain bones and muscles by working them against gravity. Examples are carrying a child, lifting weights, and walking. They help to build and maintain muscles and bones.

**Balance and stretching activities** – enhances physical stability and flexibility, which reduces risk of injuries. Examples are gentle stretching, dancing, yoga, martial arts, and t'ai chi.

## **Benefits of Physical Activity and Exercise**

- Improves self-esteem and feelings of well-being.
- Increases fitness level.
- Helps build and maintain bones, muscles, and joints.
- Builds endurance and muscle strength.
- Enhances flexibility and posture.
- Helps manage weight.
- Lowers risk of heart disease, colon cancer, and type 2 diabetes.
- Helps control blood pressure.
- Reduces feelings of depression and anxiety.



## **Tips to Increase Your Physical Activity**

1. **Set a good example.** Be active and have your family join you. Have fun together. Play with the kids or pets. Go for a walk, tumble in the leaves, or play catch.
2. **Take the President's Challenge as a family.** Track your individual physical activities together and earn awards for active lifestyles.
3. **Establish a routine.** Set aside time each day as activity time walk, jog, skate, cycle, or swim. Adults need at least 30 minutes of physical activity most days of the week; children 60 minutes everyday or most days.

4. **Have an activity party.** Make the next birthday party centered on physical activity. Try backyard Olympics, or relay races. Have a bowling or skating party.
5. **Create your own gym.** Use household items, such as canned foods, as weights. Stairs can substitute for stair machines.
6. **Get off the couch.** Instead of sitting through TV commercials, get up and move. When you talk on the phone, lift weights or walk around. Remember to limit TV watching and computer time to 2hrs a day, keep TVs out of the bedrooms, and don't let your kids eat and watch TV at the same time.
7. **Give activity gifts.** Give gifts that encourage activity. Examples include footballs, basketballs and soccer balls. Other outdoor items such as jump ropes, kites and chalk for drawing,