

promoting healthy weight in children

smart eating and active play for a healthier tomorrow



what is a healthy weight?

A healthy weight is the weight your body naturally settles into when you consistently eat nutritiously, are physically active and balance the calories you eat with the physical activity you do. With the current emphasis on overweight and obesity, it may be easy to forget that good health is the ultimate goal and that a healthy lifestyle — not a specific body size, shape or weight — is the avenue to attain that goal. Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight is part of an ongoing lifestyle that if adopted now, can stay with you for years to come.



startling statistics

- **OVERWEIGHT AND DISEASE:** Today, nearly three times as many children and adolescents are overweight or obese compared to the 1980s. Childhood obesity has reached epidemic proportions. Seventy to 80 percent of obese adolescents may remain so as adults. In some communities, almost half of pediatric diabetes cases are type 2 diabetes, which was once believed to affect only adults. This disease is closely linked to obesity and sedentary lifestyles.
- **INACTIVITY:** The National Institute on Media and the Family reveals the average child spends more than 4½ hours each day watching TV, playing video games or browsing the Internet. Fewer than 25 percent of American children get at least 30 minutes of any type of physical activity every day.
- **PHYS ED:** Participation in daily physical education classes has declined from 42 percent in 1991 to 29 percent of students today.



what causes unhealthy weight?

Numerous factors contribute to weight problems in children and adolescents including heredity or family history, activity level, and eating habits.

- **HEREDITY:** A tendency to be overweight often runs in families. However, most children are not destined to become overweight. Healthy lifestyle habits have a stronger influence on weight than heredity alone. Your age and metabolism also play important roles.
- **LACK OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY:** Children and adolescents today are not getting the activity they need.
- **OVERFED BUT UNDERNOURISHED:** Children consume nearly 20 percent of their total daily calories from nutrient-empty, high-calorie foods while fewer than 2 percent meet the MyPyramid recommendations for the Five Food Groups.

What is Overweight and Obesity?

Overweight and obesity are body weights higher than normal. Growth charts, using Body Mass Index (BMI), are often used to record a child's height and weight.

As children grow and bodies change, health professionals look at a child's BMI and track changes over time.

A child with a BMI-for-age between the 85th and 95th percentiles is considered overweight.

A child with a BMI-for-age at the 95th percentile or higher is considered obese. See your physician or registered dietitian for more information.





how can I encourage healthy eating habits for my child?

- **BE A POSITIVE ROLE MODEL:** Family meals, positive reinforcement, wise food choices; children often mimic what they see you do.
- **PLAN AND COOK MEALS TOGETHER:** Make mealtime family time.
- **OFFER KID-SIZE SERVINGS:** Serve smaller helpings to children because adult-size portions may encourage overeating.
- **GIVE YOUR CHILD A HEALTHY START:** Children who eat breakfast have higher test scores, are able to concentrate on learning, are healthier and have improved school attendance.
- **ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO DRINK LOWFAT MILK AND WATER WITH MEALS:** Limit intake of soft drinks, fruit drinks and sport drinks.
- **PLAN AFTERNOON SNACKS:** Stock the kitchen with healthful snacks such as raw vegetables, fruit and lowfat dairy products.
- **PAY ATTENTION TO HUNGER CUES:** Your body will tell you if it's hungry or full.
- **AVOID SKIPPING MEALS:** Missed meals lead to unplanned eating.
- **RESTRICTIVE DIETS ARE USUALLY NOT APPROPRIATE FOR CHILDREN:** Consult your physician or a registered dietitian for the recommendation of a child-specific weight-management program.



how can I help my child be more active?

- **BOUNDARIES:** Set time limits for watching TV, playing video games and "chatting" on the computer. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than one to two hours per day.
- **PLAY:** Encourage activity every day after school. Play outdoors, ride a bike, walk the dog, toss a ball.
- **FAMILY TIME:** As a family, adopt a lifestyle that includes regular physical activity. For example, walk after dinner or play games that incorporate movement (such as Wii™ fit or Guitar Hero®).
- **ENCOURAGE:** Provide an opportunity for your child to experience a variety of activities. Let him/her choose what he/she likes to do best.
- **ENJOY:** Activity should be enjoyable; kids may resist it if it feels like punishment.

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resources

Action for Healthy Kids
www.actionforhealthykids.org

America On the Move™
www.americaonthemove.org

CDC Growth Charts
www.cdc.gov/growthcharts

Fuel Up To Play 60
www.fueluptoplay60.com

Healthy Weight Network
www.healthyweightnetwork.com

Healthy Youth for a Healthy Future
Office of the Surgeon General, Childhood Overweight and Obesity Prevention Initiative
www.surgeongeneral.gov/obesityprevention/index.html

Kids Walk-To-School
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/kidswalk

Let's Move!
www.letsmove.gov

MyPyramid
Updated food guidelines, tips and worksheets,
NEW: MyPyramid for preschoolers
www.MyPyramid.gov

NUTRITION.gov
www.nutrition.gov

Nutrition Explorations
www.nutritionexplorations.org

SPARK (Sports, Play and Active Recreation for Kids)
www.foundation.sdsu.edu/projects/spark

TAKE 10!
www.Take10.net

We Can! Program
National Institutes of Health (NIH)
<http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov>

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