



September is Childhood Obesity Awareness Month

Childhood Obesity Causes & Consequences

Childhood obesity happens when a child is well above the normal or healthy weight for his or her age and height. Much like adults, children become obese as a result of their behavior, their environment, and/or genetics.

Behavior

Behaviors that influence extra weight gain include eating high-calorie, low-nutrient foods and beverages, not getting enough exercise, medication use, sleep routines, and too much sedentary time (e.g. watching TV and being online).

In contrast, consuming a healthy diet and being physically active can help children not only to maintain a healthy weight, but also to grow. Balancing energy (or calories) consumed from foods and beverages with the energy (or calories) burned through physical activity plays an important role in preventing excessive weight gain. It also helps us prevent long-lasting diseases such as type 2 diabetes, cancer, and heart disease.

- **Eating Well**

A healthy diet follows the *2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. This emphasizes eating a variety of vegetables and fruits, whole grains, lean proteins, and low-fat and fat-free dairy products. It also limits foods and beverages with added sugars, solid fats, or sodium. Here are examples of easy, low-fat, and low-sugar treats that are 100 calories or less:

- 1 medium-size apple
- 1 medium-size banana
- 1 cup blueberries
- 1 cup grapes
- 1 cup carrots, broccoli, or bell peppers with 2 tbsp. hummus

- **Being Active**

The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommends that children 6 and older do at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day.

This may sound like a lot, but don't worry! Your child may already be meeting these guidelines. Active play is the best exercise for younger children. As he or she gets older, encourage him or her to do these three types of physical activity:

1. Aerobic activity should make up most of your child's physical activity each day. This can include either moderate-intensity activities, such as brisk walking, or high-intensity activities, such as running or swimming.
2. Muscle strengthening activities such as gymnastics or push-ups. These type of activities help work major muscle groups of the body.
3. Bone-strengthening activities such jumping rope or running. These type of activities help tone and build muscle and bone mass.

Community Environment

It can be difficult for children and parents to make healthy food choices and get enough physical activity when they are in environments that do not support healthy habits. Places such as child care centers, schools, or communities can affect diet and activity through the foods and drinks they offer and the opportunities for physical activity they provide. Other community factors that affect diet and physical activity include the cost of healthy food options, peer and social support, marketing and promotion, and rules that determine a community's design.

Consequences of Obesity

- High blood pressure and high cholesterol, which are risk factors for heart disease
- Increased risk of insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes
- Sleep apnea (repeated disruption of normal breathing during sleep)
- Joint problems (knee, thigh and hips) and muscular discomfort (back pain)
- Fatty liver disease, gallstones, and gastroesophageal reflux (heartburn)
- Psychological problems such as anxiety and depression
- Low self-esteem and lower self-reported quality of life
- Social problems such as bullying and stigma
- Adult obesity
- Increased risk of heart disease
- Increased risk of cancer

The 5-2-1-0 Solution

- 5 | Eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day.
- 2 | Limit recreational screen time to less than two hours per day.
- 1 | Get one hour or more of physical activity each day.
- 0 | Consume zero sugary drinks (soda, juice, sports drinks). Instead, drink water and low-fat milk.

-Courtesy of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention