

Title: Keeping your child healthy: preventing childhood obesity

Author: Melissa Plog

Date: April 27, 2008

Key words: childhood obesity, prevention

Abstract:

As a parent, it is important to know that being overweight is a significant health risk for your child. In addition to increasing their risk for numerous diseases, being overweight may also affect how your child feels about himself or herself. In addition, overweight children often grow up to be overweight adults. Parents do have a significant impact on their children's eating and exercise habits, and establishing healthy habits is the key to maintaining a healthy weight.

This document was created by a medical student enrolled in the Primary Care Clerkship at the University of Minnesota Medical School as part of the course project. The aim of the project is to present information on a medical topic in the format of a patient education handout. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Minnesota Medical School physicians and faculty. These materials are provided for informational purposes only and are in no way intended to take the place of the advice and recommendations of your personal health care provider. The information provided may no longer be up to date since it has not been reviewed since the date of creation. The information provided should not be used to diagnose a health problem or disease, or as a means of determining treatment. In the event of a medical emergency, immediately contact a doctor or call 911.

How to know if your child is at risk:

At the doctor's office, your child is weighed and measured. Your child's height and weight are then used to calculate his or her BMI = body mass index.

$$\text{BMI} = (\text{weight in kg})/(\text{height in m})^2$$

If your child's BMI is between the 85th and 95th percentile, he or she is at risk for being overweight. If your child's BMI is greater than the 95th percentile, he or she is overweight.

What are the risks:

Children who are overweight experience more health problems than children who are not overweight, including:

- Heart problems
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Type II diabetes
- Fatty liver disease
- Irregular periods
- Depression
- Low self-esteem

Where to look for more information:

<http://www.aap.org/obesity/>

http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/obesity/childhood/tips_for_parents.htm

http://www.helpguide.org/mental/childhood_obesity.htm

Healthy eating:

<http://www.mypyramid.gov>

<http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/>

http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/nutrition/nutrition_for_everyone/healthy_weight/portion_size.htm

For kids:

<http://www.bam.gov/>

<http://www.healthiergeneration.org/kids/>

Keeping Your Child Healthy:

preventing childhood obesity



The number of children that are overweight or obese (very overweight) is increasing in the U.S. As a parent, it is important to know that being overweight is a big health risk for your child. Being overweight may affect how your child feels about himself or herself. Children who are overweight are very likely to be overweight as adults. The good news is that parents have a large impact on their child's eating and exercise habits. So help your children form healthy habits now that will last a lifetime!

What causes children to be overweight:

2 things work together to cause children to become overweight: **genetics** and **lifestyle**

Genetics = genes that are passed down from parents to their children that determine body type and other factors that contribute to weight gain

Lifestyle = the choices a person makes about what they eat and how much physical activity they get

* Weight gain occurs when a person takes in more energy (calories in food) than he or she burns through physical activity

If your child is overweight ...

It is important to focus on creating healthy habits at home, and NOT to focus on dieting. Children are still growing and dieting can lead to poor growth. Keep reading for tips on establishing healthy habits.

It is important to tell your children that healthy kids come in all shapes and sizes!

What can I do to decrease my child's risk for becoming overweight or obese?

The trick to helping your child maintain or reach a healthy weight is to create good eating and exercise habits that the whole family lives by.

- Serve meals that include servings of vegetables, fruits, whole-grains and low-fat dairy
 - Limit the amount of calories that your child gets from beverages: no pop and only 1-2 (small) glasses of juice per day
 - Limit the amount of sugar and saturated fat that your child eats
 - As much as possible, sit down to eat dinner together as a family
 - Never use food as a reward
 - Be aware of how much food you are serving your child (portion size) and that how much food your child needs changes as she grows
- Do not force your child to clean his plate, he knows when he is full
 - Encourage your child to eat breakfast each day
 - Limit the amount of fast-food your child eats
 - Have healthy, low-calorie foods available for snacks
 - Limit the amount of time your child spends in front of the television or video games to less than 2 hours daily
 - Do not put a television in your child's room
 - Encourage your child to get about 60 minutes of physical activity each day (can be divided into smaller periods of time throughout the day)
 - Exercise as a family, make it fun!
 - Always congratulate your child for being active and eating right