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Childhood Obesity FREE

CAUSES OF OBESITY

In most cases, obesity is the result of an energy imbalance. Energy is measured as calories. Food provides the calories the body uses during normal functioning, everyday activities, and exercise. When a person consumes more calories than that person's body uses, those extra calories are stored as fat.

Some health conditions can cause weight gain. These problems are uncommon and account for less than 1% of cases of childhood obesity. Certain medications, such as steroids and antidepressants, can also cause weight gain.

HEALTH RISKS

Health problems associated with childhood obesity include high cholesterol, high blood pressure, insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes, joint pain, asthma, sleep apnea, and fatty liver disease.

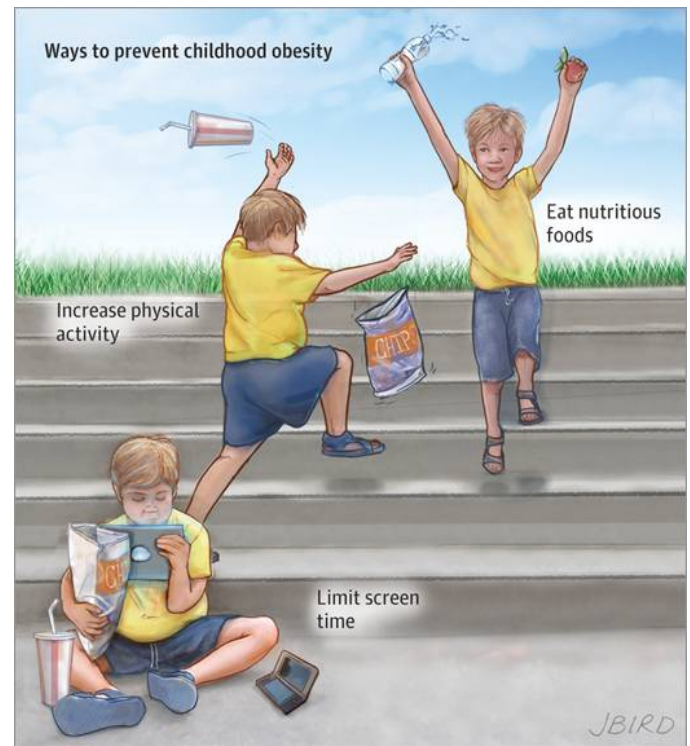
Obesity affects not just physical health but mental health as well. Children who are obese are more likely to have low self-esteem and a negative body image.

Children who are obese are also more likely to be obese as adults. More than three-fourths of obese teenagers will be obese as adults. So childhood obesity places kids at risk of serious long-term health issues. Obesity during adulthood is associated with health problems like heart disease, stroke, some types of cancer, and arthritis.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Parents and caregivers can help children have a healthy diet and be physically active.

- Help foster good eating habits. Have fresh fruits and vegetables at home for snacks. Instead of full-fat milk, yogurt, and cheese, buy low-fat or nonfat dairy products. Offer kids water or low-fat milk to drink instead of soda or juice. Limit foods like potato chips, cookies, and ice cream, which can be high in calories from fat or sugar. Involve children in planning and preparing meals, and sit down to eat together.
- Encourage physical activity. Playing outside is a good way for your child to be active. Visit a nearby park or go for a brisk walk with your child several times per week. Look for opportunities for your child to participate in team sports. Indoor activities include dancing, using an exercise video or DVD, jumping rope, and climbing stairs.
- Reduce screen time. Children spend an average of 7 hours a day watching TV and movies, playing video games, and surfing the Internet. Watching TV can reduce physical activity, lead to increased snacking, and expose children to advertisements for unhealthy foods. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than 2 hours of screen time per day.





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Trying to change too many things at once can be overwhelming and frustrating. Commit to making 1 or 2 small changes at a time. Once the new, healthy habits are part of your child's routine, take another step toward a healthier lifestyle. Provide a supportive environment for your child. Celebrate successes together and discuss any setbacks that occur. Continue to encourage your child's efforts.

Talk to your child's pediatrician if you are concerned about your child's weight.

American Academy of Pediatrics, American Heart Association, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention