



# Preventing Childhood Obesity



Childhood Obesity is defined as a BMI > 95th percentile for age and sex according to national charts.

$$BMI = \frac{\text{Weight in Pounds}}{(\text{Height in Inches}) \times (\text{Height in Inches})} \times 703$$

1 in 7 low-income preschool aged children are obese.



<http://blogs.simplyfun.com>

In Illinois, 15.3% of 2-5 year olds are overweight and 14.6% are obese.

## Childhood Obesity Factors

### Genetics

- You can't change your genetics, but you can improve your lifestyle.
- One obese parent = 50% chance of an obese child; 2 obese parents = 80% chance of an obese child.

### Nutrition

- Eating too many calories and not expending those extra calories causes weight gain.
- Sources of poor nutrition include high calorie convenience foods and sugary drinks, bigger portion sizes, less family meals together.

### Physical Activity

- Increase in TV, computers, and video games with decreased physical activity.
- Benefits of exercise include increasing strength and endurance, building healthy bones and muscles, helps control weight, reduces anxiety and stress.
- Recommendation for 6-17 year olds: 60 minutes of physical activity daily.

### Family Factors

- Cultural—some societies see excess body fat as desirable.
- Financial—low income families may believe they don't have the means to provide a healthy lifestyle.
- Lifestyle Dynamics—when a child feels stress in the home, food can be used to emotionally cope. This can cause poor eating habits which can lead to eating disorders.

Childhood obesity has more than tripled in the past 30 years.



## Disease Risks from Obesity

- Type 2 diabetes
- High blood pressure and cholesterol
- Heart disease
- Fatty liver and gallstones
- Heartburn
- Asthma
- Sleep apnea (obstruction in airway during sleep)
- Joint and muscle discomfort

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## Help Prevent Childhood Obesity

- Be a good example of eating healthy and exercising regularly—invite children to join.
- Encourage a healthy lifestyle and be physically active.
- Emphasize the benefits of exercise in managing weight.
- Don't use food as a reward or punishment.
- Be patient—don't push too hard or it may backfire and cause increased emotional eating.
- Use ideas from programs such as "Let's Move Child Care!" and "5-4-3-2-1 Go!"

### Michigan Office

139 W Lake Lansing Rd, Suite 120 • East Lansing, MI 48823

Telephone: (800) 234-3287 • Fax: (517) 332-5543

### Association for Child Development

[www.acdkids.org](http://www.acdkids.org)

### Illinois Office

4415 W Harrison St, Suite 535 • Hillside, IL 60162

Telephone: (800) 284-5273 • Fax: (708) 236-0872

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