

CHILDHOOD OBESITY MANAGEMENT

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Is your child overweight? Here's what you need to know and what you can do

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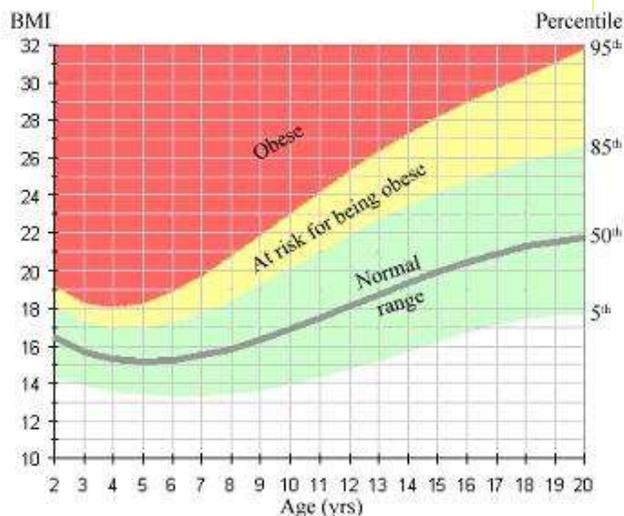
Facts and Stats

1 in 4

✚ 25% of Australian children are overweight or obese.



✚ Out of those, 25 – 50 % have a chance of becoming obese adults



We all know that exercise and healthy eating are important for our kids. But, unfortunately, facts and figures are suggesting that Australia is struggling to fight this serious health problem-obesity!

DEFINITION OF CHILDHOOD OBESITY

A child's weight status is determined using an age- and sex-specific percentile for BMI rather than the BMI categories used for adults. This is because children's body composition varies as they age and varies between boys and girls. Therefore, BMI levels among children and teens need to be expressed relative to other children of the same age and sex.

For children between 2 and 20 years of age:

- Underweight – BMI < 5th percentile
- Normal weight – BMI between 5th and 85th percentile
- Overweight – BMI between 85th and 95th percentile
- Obese – BMI ≥ 95th percentile
- Severe Obesity – BMI ≥ 120 % of 95th percentiles or BMI ≥ 35

HEALTH CONSEQUENCES OF OBESITY IN CHILDREN

Most of the health problems associated with obesity will become obvious in adulthood but early signs of these problems are commonly found in children for example;

- Hormones disorders: Type 2 diabetes, Polycystic ovarian syndrome
- Eating disorders: bulimia or binge eating
- Bony disorders: flat feet, forearm fractures, joint problems
- Digestive disorders: Fatty liver, reflux
- Heart related problems: high cholesterol, high blood pressure
- Lungs disorders: breathlessness when active, asthma, sleep apnoea causing day time tiredness
- Mood and wellbeing especially in adolescents such as low self esteem, depression, anxiety

WHAT ARE THE CAUSES THEN?

- Food choices - too much bad food, and extra foods which are not part of essential nutrients
- Too little exercise
- Increased screen time or sedentary behavior
- Overweight parents
- Genetics

Note: screen time involves time spent using all electronic media such as TV, seated games, and computers



WHAT CAN WE DO?

1. Healthy eating

Refer to Australian guide for health eating at the website=www.eatforhealth.gov.au

Make plans for meals and snacks one day ahead, involve the kids

Always make time for proper breakfast

It is always best to always send them to school with a lunchbox

Change the language – ask “Are you full?” instead of “Do you want more?”

Hide the sweets/savories or just do not buy them

2. Physical activity – how much?

Help find an activity they like from dance, to soccer, to tennis or even trampolining, and show your support

Increase activity as a family – walking to and from school or local shops, throwing a Frisbee, going on a family ride or swim

National guidelines for recommended hours of physical activity are as follows:

- 0 -5 yrs old: 3 hrs of daily light to vigorous activity
- 5 – 17 yrs old: 1 hr of daily physical activity and 3 days per week of bone and muscle strengthening activities

3. Limit screen time which is potentially the hardest

National guidelines for daily screen time

- < 2 yrs: none
- 2 -5 yrs: < 1 hr
- 5 – 17 yrs: < 2 hrs

Some screen time is necessary but if 2 hours is the recommended limit and one hour is taken up with study, that means there is simply an hour left for non-necessary screen time unless it is an interactive game like “just dance”

4. Set the example—if you lead the way, they will follow



Food and drinks to leave out of the lunchbox

Snack foods and drinks that are high in added sugar, saturated fat or salt are generally low in nutrients. They also provide a lot of kilojoules that can contribute to children becoming overweight or obese. We call these 'sometimes' foods and drinks because they should only be consumed sometimes and in small amounts. Sticky, sweet foods can also cause tooth decay.

Sticky or sweet foods:

- lollies, chocolates, jelly cups
- cakes, doughnuts, sweet muffins
- plain sweet/cream-filled biscuits
- muesli /cereal bars
- fruit bars and fruit straps

Salty, high fat foods:

- potato chips
- corn chips
- cheesy balls, twists
- small oven-baked savoury biscuits
- devon and salami

Sweetened drinks:

- cordial and soft drink
- fruit juice
- flavoured mineral water
- fruit juice drinks
- sports drinks

It is best not to pack these 'sometimes' foods and drinks in lunchboxes. If you do occasionally put a 'sometimes' food or drink in the lunchbox, keep it to a very small portion only.

Note about food allergies: Some services may ask families not to pack specific foods to ensure a safe environment for children with severe food allergies. Please discuss these needs with your service staff.



For more information and ideas on healthy eating and physical activity go to www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au

References

1. <http://www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au>
2. <http://www.eatforhealth.gov.au>
3. <http://www.health.gov.au>
4. <http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au>
5. <http://www.rch.org.au> : Practical management of childhood obesity, Dr. Matthew Sabin
6. <http://www.aihw.gov.au>

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