INFORMATION FROM: https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/childhood/index.html

Childhood Overweight & Obesity

Childhood obesity is a serious health problem in the United States where 1 in 5 children and adolescents are affected. Some groups of children are more affected than others, but all children are at risk of gaining weight that is higher than what is considered healthy.

Obesity is complex. Many factors can contribute to excess weight gain including behavior, genetics and taking certain medications. But societal and community factors also matter: child care and school environments, neighborhood design, access to healthy, affordable foods and beverages, and access to safe and convenient places for physical activity affect our ability to make healthy choices.

Every child deserves a healthy start in life. Learn what parents and caregivers can to do help prevent obesity at home, how healthcare systems can help families prevent and manage childhood obesity, and what strategies communities can use to support a healthy, active lifestyle for all.

Childhood Obesity Facts
How many children in the United States have obesity?

Defining Childhood Overweight & Obesity
How is childhood obesity measured?

Causes and Consequences
What contributes to childhood obesity? What are the health risks?

Clinical Guidelines
Resources for clinicians and healthcare providers on childhood obesity. Also see CDC's Clinical Growth Charts.

Child and Teen BMI Calculator
Use this calculator for children aged 2 through 19 years old.

Child & Teen Healthy Weight and Obesity Resources
LEARN MORE
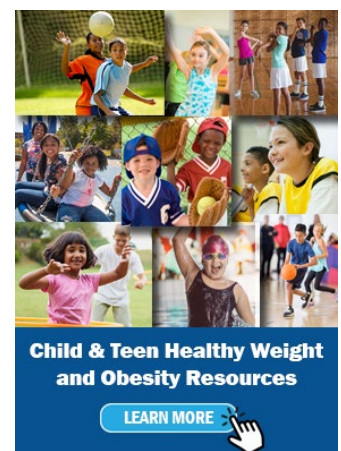
Childhood Obesity Facts

Prevalence of Childhood Obesity in the United States

Childhood obesity is a serious problem in the United States, putting children and adolescents at risk for poor health. Obesity prevalence among children and adolescents is still too high.

For children and adolescents aged 2-19 years in 2017-2020[1]:

- The prevalence of obesity was 19.7% and affected about 14.7 million children and adolescents.
- Obesity prevalence was 12.7% among 2- to 5-year-olds, 20.7% among 6- to 11-year-olds, and 22.2% among 12- to 19-year-olds. Childhood obesity is also more common among certain populations.
- Obesity prevalence was 26.2% among Hispanic children, 24.8% among non-Hispanic Black children, 16.6% among non-Hispanic White children, and 9.0% among non-Hispanic Asian children.

[1]Read CDC National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) data brief

Note: Obesity is defined as a body mass index (BMI) at or above the 95th percentile of the CDC sex-specific BMI-for-age growth charts.

Obesity and Socioeconomic Status

[Read the *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)*]

- In 2011-2014, among children and adolescents aged 2-19 years, the prevalence of obesity decreased as the head of household's level of education increased.
- Obesity prevalence was 18.9% among children and adolescents aged 2-19 years in the lowest income group, 19.9% among those in the middle-income group, and 10.9% among those in the highest income group.
- Obesity prevalence was lower in the highest income group among non-Hispanic Asian boys and Hispanic boys.
- Obesity prevalence was lower in the highest income group among non-Hispanic White girls, non-Hispanic Asian girls, and Hispanic girls. Obesity prevalence did not differ by income among non-Hispanic Black girls.

Women, Infant, Children (WIC) Data

- Obesity Among WIC-Enrolled Young Children
  CDC works with the USDA to analyze child obesity data from the WIC Participant and Program Characteristics Report (WIC PC).

Preventing Childhood Obesity: ⑤ Things You Can Do at Home

Obesity is a complex disease with many contributing factors, but there are ways parents and caregivers can help children on their journey to good health.

About 1 in 5 American children has obesity. Compared to children with healthy weight, children with overweight or obesity are at a higher risk for asthma, sleep apnea, bone and joint problems, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease. Children with obesity are also more likely to experience bullying, social isolation, depression, and lower self-esteem. While there is no simple solution, there are many ways parents and caregivers can help children reach a healthy weight.

① Eat the Rainbow

How much of each food group do you and your family need?

Find out with a personalized MyPlate Planexternal icon.
Having a healthy diet can help children get the nutrients they need for healthy growth and development, and help them reach a healthy weight. A healthy diet is rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and low-fat or fat-free dairy.

Unfortunately, very few people get enough fruits and vegetables. In 2017, just 2% of high school students ate enough vegetables, and 7% ate enough fruit. Help your kids eat the rainbow: make half of their plate fruits and vegetables for optimal health.

② Move More

Compared to those who are inactive, physically active youth have stronger muscles and better cardiovascular fitness. They also typically have lower body fat and stronger bones. Regular physical activity in childhood also reduces the risk of depression. Children need at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day – try these tips to help your kids move moreexternal icon.

③ Slow Down on Sugar

Be aware of your child's growth

Learn how obesity is measured in children, and use CDC's Child and Teen BMI Calculator to screen your child for potential weight issues.
Most of us eat and drink too many added sugars, which can lead to health problems such as weight gain and obesity, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease. Children under age 2 should have no added sugar in their diet at all, and children over age 2 should keep sugars to less than 10% of their daily calories.

A good way to slow down on sugar is by avoiding sugary drinks like soda, juice drinks, and flavored milk. Help your kids rethink their drink by offering water, plain low-fat milk, or 100% juice instead.

④ Reduce Screen Time

Adults and children spend over 7 hours a day being sedentary – and that doesn't include time spent sleeping! Many of these sedentary hours are spent sitting or laying down with a phone, tablet, or computer; watching TV; or playing video games (also known as **screen time**).

Too much screen time has health consequences: it's associated with poor sleep, weight gain, lower grades in school, and poor mental health in youth. When you reduce screen time, you free up time for family activities. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends creating a family media planexternal icon, and has examples such as keeping meal times tech-free, charging devices at night outside the bedroom, turning screens off an hour before bed, and many more.

⑤ Sleep Well

Good sleep is critical to prevent type 2 diabetes, obesity, injuries, poor mental health, and problems with attention and behavior. Did you know that children 6-12 years old need 9-12 hours of uninterrupted sleep a night and youth 13-18 need 8-10 hours? Too little sleep is associated with obesity partly because inadequate sleep can make us eat more and be less physically active. Help your children sleep better by making sure they're active during the day, removing screens from their bedrooms, and setting a consistent sleep schedule, even on weekends.

Kids imitate the adults in their lives. Be a role model for them by adopting these healthy habits, and they will too! Finally, remember that obesity is a complex disease with many contributing factors. Learn more about what states and communities can do to make healthy and active living accessible for everyone.

More Tips and Resources:

- Tips to Help Children Maintain a Healthy Weight
- Good Nutrition Starts Early
- Water and Healthier Drinks

- How much physical activity do children need?
- Overweight & Obesity
- Sleep and Health