

At least one out of every five children is overweight. In the last 20 years the number of overweight children has increased. Children who are overweight are at risk of becoming overweight teenagers and adults and at risk for diabetes, high blood pressure, depression and breathing problems.

What Causes Children and Teenagers to Become Overweight?

Children and teenagers become overweight for many reasons. The most common causes are:

- Family history of obesity
- Little or no exercise
- Eating foods that are not healthy, like foods with a lot of fats and sugars
- Over eating
- Problems at home or with friends
- Stress

In rare cases

- Medical problems
- Depression

Is My Child Overweight?

If you think your child is overweight talk to your child's doctor. Your child's doctor will look at:

- Your child's height and weight to see if your child's weight is healthy.
- Your child's age and how he/she is growing

How Can I Help My Overweight Child?

The best way to help your overweight child is to:

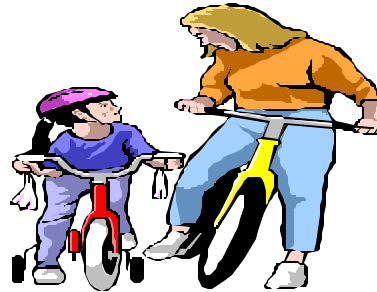
Be supportive:

- One of the most important things you can do is to let your child know that you love him or her.
- Focus on the important things about your child, like his or her health. Don't focus on your child's weight.

Focus on the Family:

- Work to changing your family's physical activity and eating habits

Increase your Family's Physical Activities:



- Combine regular physical activities with healthy eating.
- Be a role model for your children.
- Plan family activities
- Understand your child's needs.
- Watch less TV or play fewer video games.
- Take the stairs instead of taking the elevator

Teach your family healthy eating habits:

This will help your children eat with a good attitude. Your children will learn that food should be enjoyed and will help them grow and develop, and is needed for energy to keep your body running. Here is a list of things you can do:

- Suggest healthy food choices, instead of telling your child what is healthy.
- Don't place your child on a restricted diet.
- Do not use food as a reward
- Do not use food as punishment
- Eat meals together as a family
- Help you child learn to eat slowly and only when he /she is hungry.
- Drink more water and fewer drinks with added sugar, like sodas, fruit juices, sports drinks.
- Plan healthy snacks
- Buy foods that are healthy, like low fat milk, fresh fruit, and vegetables
- Do not eat while watching TV
- Eat breakfast every day.
- Let your children help plan and prepare meals
- Involve your children when you go food shopping



If you have trouble changing your family's eating and exercise habits, ask your child's doctor to refer you to a registered dietitian (RD). A registered dietitian can help you choose healthy foods for your family.

If your child's health is at risk unless he or she loses weight, you should ask your child's doctor to refer you to a weight loss treatment program. A good program should help the whole family make healthy changes to their eating and activity habits.



If Your Child is Overweight:

Remember:

- Some overweight children will not need to lose weight, but they need to control their weight so that they can "grow into" their weight.
- If your child is very heavy, talk to your child's doctor.
- Your child's diet should be safe and healthy
- Your child should lose weight slowly
- Crash diets and diet pills can affect his or her growth and are not recommended
- To keep the weight off, your child should change his or her eating habits and exercise.
- Weight loss is a lifetime effort
- All weight control programs for children should be supervised by a doctor

Where Can I Get More Information?

If you need more information on weight control and nutrition call:

- National Center for Nutrition and Dietetics of the American Dietetic Association at:

1-800-366-1655

- The Weight Control Information Network at:

1-877-946-4627

- MetroPlus Health Plan, Inc. at:

1-800-579-9798

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for medical care and advice of your doctor. There may be variations in treatment that your doctor may recommend based on individual facts about you.

Source: the Weight-control Information Center (WIN) - the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases and the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute.

**MetroPlus Health Plan
160 Water Street, New York, NY 10038**

**Member information:
1-800-303-9626**

**For information about MetroPlus Health Plan:
1-800-475-METRO**

HELPING YOUR OVERWEIGHT CHILD OR TEENAGER

This pamphlet was designed to help you learn how to help your child control his /her weight. It does not replace your doctors recommendations.

