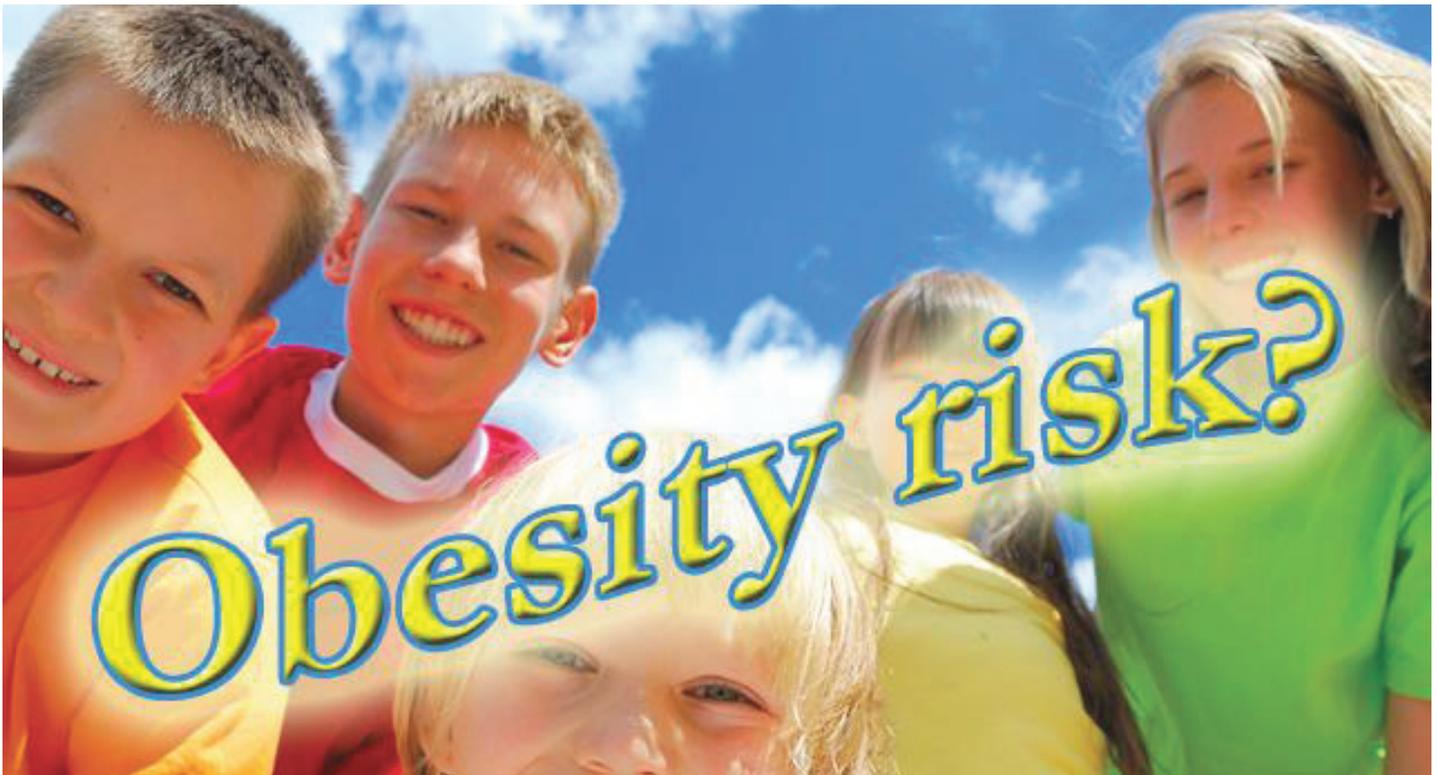


# CHILDHOOD OBESITY CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES



**C**hildhood obesity is a complex health issue. It occurs when a child is well above the normal or healthy weight for his or her age and height. The causes of excess weight gain in young people are similar to those in adults, including behavior and genetics. Obesity is also influenced by a person's community as it can affect the ability to make healthy choices.

## Behavior

Behaviors that influence excess weight gain include eating high-calorie, low-nutrient foods and beverages, medication use and sleep routines. Not getting enough physical activity and spending too much time on sedentary activities such as watching television or other screen devices can lead to weight gain.

In contrast, consuming healthy foods and being physically active can help children grow and maintain a healthy weight. Balancing energy or calories consumed from foods and beverages with the calories burned through activity plays a role in preventing excess weight gain. In addition, eating healthy foods and being physically active helps to prevent chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes, some cancers, and heart disease.

## Use these resources to eat well and be active!

A healthy diet follows the 2015-2020 [Dietary Guidelines for American](#). It emphasizes eating a variety of vegetables and fruits, whole grains, a variety of lean protein foods, and low-fat



and fat-free dairy products. It also recommends limiting foods and beverages with added sugars, solid fats, or sodium.

**Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans** recommends children that are ages 6 – 17 years do at least sixty minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day. Children aged 3 – 5 years should be physically active throughout the day for growth and development.

Learn about **Healthy Weight — Finding a Balance**



## Community Environment

It can be difficult to make healthy food choices and get enough physical activity in environments that do not support healthy habits. Places such as childcare centers, schools, or communities can affect diet and activity through the foods and drinks they offer and the opportunities for physical activity they provide. Other community factors include the affordability of healthy food options, peer and social supports, marketing and promotion and policies that determine how a community is designed.

## Consequences of Obesity

### More Immediate Health Risks

Obesity during childhood can harm the body in a variety of ways. Children who have obesity are more likely to have:

- High blood pressure and high cholesterol, which are risk factors for cardiovascular disease
- Increased risk of impaired glucose tolerance, insulin resistance, and type 2 diabetes
- Breathing problems, such as asthma and sleep apnea
- Joint problems and musculoskeletal discomfort
- Fatty liver disease, gallstones, and gastro-esophageal reflux (i.e., heartburn).

Childhood obesity is also related to:

- Psychological problems like anxiety and depression
- Low self-esteem and lower self-reported quality of life
- Social problems such as bullying and stigma

## Future Health Risks

- Children who are obese are more likely to become adults with obesity. Adult obesity is associated with increased risk of several serious health conditions including heart disease, cancer and type 2 diabetes
- If children have obesity, their obesity and disease risk factors in adulthood are more likely to be more severe

