

What is obesity?

<http://www.cyh.com/HealthTopics/HealthTopicDetailsKids.aspx?p=335&id=2462&np=152>

Obesity is what doctors call it when you have too much body fat. Obesity can lead to health problems.

- If more than 25% of a man's total weight is fat, then he is classified as being obese.
- For a woman it is more than 32%.
- Why is it more for women? Because women have a different body shape.



When someone is obese it is very hard for them to lose weight - so it is very important that you do not try to make them feel bad about themselves or try to tell them how they 'should' lose weight.

How do you know if someone is obese?

- Kids are checked against the average height and weight for kids of their age. So if a kid's weight is a lot more than the average for their height, it could be that the child is obese.
- Another check is the BMI check, (Body Mass Index). This involves doing a sum with the numbers from weight and height to see if there is a problem.
- A doctor or health professional can measure the thickness of flesh over the triceps muscle (the underside of the arm above the elbow) and over the back of the body. This is called the 'skinfold' or 'pinch' test.



It is best if a doctor or other health professional does these tests, as they know how to do them and can explain what they mean.

Causes of obesity in children

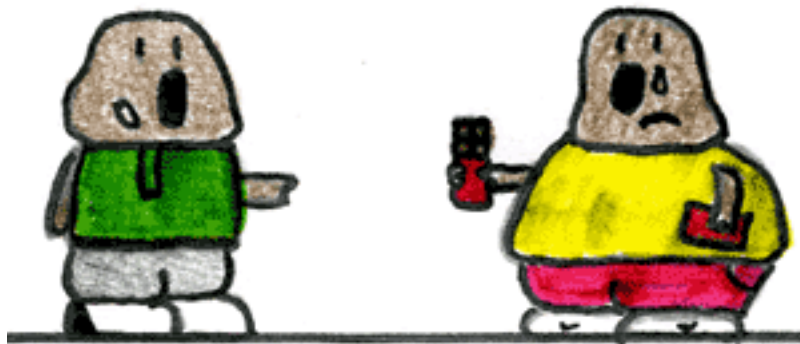
1. If parents are overweight, children can often be overweight too. Part of this is due to genes and part is due to the family's pattern of eating and exercise.
2. Being overweight during the first 4 years of life means you are more likely to be overweight or obese later on.
3. An unhealthy diet is a major cause of obesity - especially eating fatty foods or eating too much food, even if it is good food.

4. Not getting enough exercise can lead to obesity - eg. sitting around a lot, spending hours on a computer or watching TV for more than an hour a day.
5. Not getting enough sleep can affect the body's hormones and make a person more likely to become obese.

Problems caused by obesity

There are many health problems which can be caused by obesity. Coronary heart disease, diabetes, and damage to weight-bearing joints (such as your knees) are the main ones. Social problems are probably worse for kids...

- Who wants to be called bad names?
- Who wants to be left out of games and teams?
- Who wants to have a hard time finding friends?



"You're Fat"

Kids who are obese often suffer all these things.

I am a Loner



It is wrong for people to be hurtful to others.

It is bullying, even when someone says 'I was only kidding'. No one accepts that kind of behavior.

How to avoid obesity

Not all overweight toddlers grow up to become obese adults. There are many things that can keep you a healthy, fit young person.

1. **Food.** Eat the right amount of the right stuff, and don't snack when sitting around. Get mom, dad or whoever cares for you to help you. Maybe you could plan a week's menu and then go food shopping together.

Remember eat healthy
and do daily exercise



2. **Exercise.** Look for ways to do more exercise. Our topics on exercise and fitness have lots of good ideas. Maybe walking or cycling to and from school with your friends?
3. **Get a good night's sleep.** Don't stay up late playing computer games or watching TV. Get up early and keep busy all day so that you are ready to sleep at night.
4. **Get involved.** Join in things at school or after school, so that you have an interest and can spend more time with other kids having fun.
5. **Be determined** to change and make the most of yourself. You only get one body so try to look after it and feel good about it.
6. **Being happy.** Everybody has bad days, and often this means going for the comfort food (mine is dark chocolate!) However, if you are having one of those days, it is much healthier, and you feel much better afterwards, if you do some exercise. Run, walk, dance, skip, hit a ball or do anything else you can think of for a while, and those feel-good chemicals will start coming into your brain, making you feel that life's OK after all!

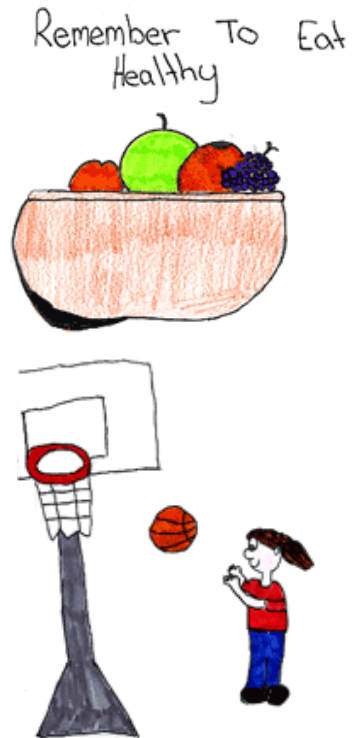


Helping your friend

If your friend has a problem with obesity, then you can be a good friend by:

- saying nice things about the things she does that you think are great - such as her nice smile, how she is kind to others and has skills such as playing a musical instrument or being good at sports.

- eating good stuff yourself and encouraging her to do the same
- playing with her in an active way
- getting her to join in sports lessons by encouragement
- helping her to practice sports skills
- doing something active together after school, like walking the dog or bike riding, rather than watching TV or playing video games
- telling the teacher if your friend is being teased or called unkind names - this is harassment and a type of bullying that no one should have to suffer
- commenting on the things that she is good at



Dr Kate says:



It is not a good idea for kids to go onto a strict diet. Growing bodies need a variety of food. A doctor or nutritionist can help you and your family to eat healthily.

When families have dinner together they often eat healthier food and enjoy catching up on what each other is doing.

Did you know?

In Australia one in four children are overweight and it is likely that more will be overweight by 2020.

How about making this prediction wrong? Encourage your family and friends to eat healthy food and be fit and healthy.