

SPORTS PARTICIPATION HELPS PREVENT YOUTH OBESITY

IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING A HEALTHY WEIGHT

Obesity has become a national public health problem significantly impacting the current and future health of American children and adolescents. Participating in sports or other forms of physical activity can help children maintain a healthy weight. Sports provide opportunities to regularly engage in moderate to vigorous physical activity, and can help to prevent conditions and diseases associated with physical inactivity and being overweight or obese.

Overweight refers to having excess body weight for a particular height from fat, muscle, bone, water, or a combination of these factors.

Obesity is defined as having excess body fat.

- Nearly 1/3 of children and adolescents between the ages of 2 and 19 are either overweight or obese.
- Being overweight or obese negatively affects the physical and psychological health of youth.
- Obesity causes a broad range of health problems in children and adolescents that previously were not seen until adulthood.
- Being overweight or obese increases a child's risk for developing asthma, type 2 diabetes, sleep apnea, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol.
- Overweight children and adolescents are more likely to become overweight or obese adults.

COMPLICATIONS OF CHILDHOOD OBESITY

TYPE 2 DIABETES

LIVER DISEASE

ASTHMA

HIGH CHOLESTEROL

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

EMOTIONAL/MENTAL HEALTH

SLEEP APNEA

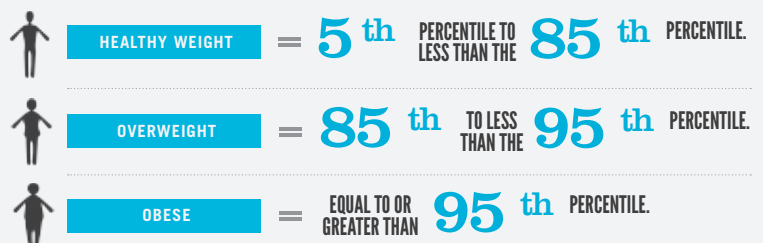
FEET PROBLEMS

HOW DO WE KNOW IF A CHILD IS OVERWEIGHT OR OBESE?

Because children's height and weight are continually changing as they grow, determining an appropriate body composition is challenging. Body mass index (BMI) is generally used to determine fatness based on growth charts developed by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

These growth charts use a child's BMI, age and sex to produce a BMI percentile. This percentile can be compared to other boys or girls that are the same age to help doctors and parents determine if a child is overweight or obese.

BMI percentile ranks range from 0 to 100 percent and indicate the percentage of children that are below and above the ranking. For example, a BMI percentile ranking of 50% would indicate that the child's BMI is higher than 50% of children of the same age and sex.



SPORTS PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN WEIGHT CONTROL

- Youth who participate in sports are more physically active than nonathletes.
- Girls who play sports in middle school are much more physically active in 12th grade. This is important because physical activity levels typically decline as girls enter high school.
- A study of public high schools found that **29%** of boys and **34%** of girls are overweight and **16%** of boys and girls are obese. At these schools, students who participated in one or more sports were much less likely to be overweight or obese.
- A 2012 study found that nearly **29%** of students in New Hampshire and Vermont were either overweight or obese, but students participating on one or more sport teams were less likely to be overweight or obese compared to nonparticipants. The researchers estimated that if all adolescents played on two or more sports teams per year, the prevalence of obesity would decrease by **26%**.

GET ACTIVE

- The 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommends that children and adolescents should get 60 or more minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily.
- Very few youth obtain 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity through daily physical education classes; so alternative opportunities, such as extracurricular and community-based sports, are needed.
- Increasing the physical activity of children and adolescents increases the likelihood they will become active adults.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

SPORTS PARTICIPATION IS A GREAT WAY FOR YOUTH TO BE MORE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE, IMPROVE HEALTH, AND HAVE FUN. THERE ARE A WIDE VARIETY OF SPORTS FOR YOUTH TO TRY THROUGH SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMS. ENCOURAGE YOUTH TO FIND AN ENJOYABLE SPORT THAT IS RIGHT FOR THEM. IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT PARTICIPATION IN RECREATIONAL SPORTS CAN PROVIDE AS MUCH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AS COMPETITIVE SPORTS.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/index.html>

Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans

<http://www.health.gov/paguidelines/>

