

Childhood obesity prevention

Many parents are rightly concerned about their child's weight and how it affects them. They look for specific answers for prevention and treatment options. Unfortunately, the state of the science is a lot less precise than we would like. Are kids too concerned about their weight? What are the best strategies for prevention? What treatments work over a long time? Researchers are trying to answer those and many other questions. In many cases, common sense works well.

Prevention

Teaching healthy behaviors at a young age is important since change becomes more difficult with age. Behaviors involving physical activity and nutrition are the cornerstone of preventing obesity in children and adolescents. Families and schools are the two most critical links in providing the foundation for those behaviors.



Here are some ways that parents can establish a lifetime of healthy habits for their family:

Create an Active Environment:

- Make time for the entire family to participate in regular physical activities that everyone enjoys. Try walking, bicycling or rollerblading.
- Start an active neighborhood program. Join together with other families for group activities like touch-football, basketball, tag or hide-and-seek.
- Assign active chores to every family member such as vacuuming, washing the car or mowing the lawn. Rotate the schedule of chores to avoid boredom from routine.

Create a Healthy Eating Environment:

- Eat meals together at the dinner table at regular times.
- Avoid rushing to finish meals. Eating too quickly does not allow enough time to digest and to feel a sense of fullness.
- Avoid other activities during mealtimes such as watching TV.