

Does My Child Have a Weight Problem?

Your child may be normal, not fat.

If you are concerned about your child's weight, consider this:

- Your child may gain weight before a growth spurt. That is normal. If you are still concerned, ask for advice from your health care provider.
- Many kids slim down (maybe outgrow a chubby stage), as they get older. Did you? That may be a clue to your child's future weight and body size.

If you suspect a weight problem:

Get help. Talk to your child's health care provider right away. There is usually a reason for a weight problem. The longer you wait, the greater the risk for weight problems in the teen and adult years.

Growth charts from regular exams help your health care professional see if your child's weight and height stay within healthy ranges. Your child counts on you to get advice from experts.

If your child is overweight:

Weight loss dieting is not a healthy approach. Instead help your overweight child grow into his or her current weight.

Withholding food isn't right for kids.

(Dieting is not right for most children either.)

- Your child might not get enough food energy and nutrients to grow properly, learn, and play.
- Your child may learn to sneak food when you are not watching.
- Kids feel bad about themselves when they are treated differently. That feeling may turn to anger, stress, or overeating.
- Your child will not learn to control how much he or she eats if you decide what enough is – or if you push your child to eat less.



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Your child counts on you to learn how to enjoy food and eat in a healthful way. Your child's attitude about eating sets the stage for a healthy weight throughout life!



You Can Help Your Child to a Healthy Weight

- Help your child accept the body he or she was born with.** Pressuring your child to look or be different is not healthy. Give yourself a hug – and say, “ I like myself, too!”
- Make meals and snacks calm and pleasant!** That is the best way to encourage normal eating.
- Give your child a chance to know the signals for hunger and feeling full.** That way, your child will be able to control how much he or she eats.
- Keep fruits, vegetables, and other low-calorie foods handy.** Skip the urge to keep a lot of candy, chips, or soda around.
- Enjoy your child “in motion.”** When your child runs, jumps, and plays actively (in a safe place), that is great. Join in when you can. Moving more and sitting less is a healthful habit to learn. Inactivity appears to be a major reason for weight problems.
- Do all you can to build your child's self-esteem.** A positive attitude about himself or herself helps your child eat in a normal and healthful way.

You can achieve or keep your own healthy weight in these same ways. Remember, your child will follow your example. What you do (not only what you say) is your child's best teacher!

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