

# Causes and Prevention of Obesity in Children

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## DESCRIPTION

Children and adolescents are affected by the significant medical disease known as childhood obesity. It leads to poor self-esteem and depression in children.

The common signs and symptoms of obesity may include fatigue, joint pain, skin rashes, irritation, shortness of breath, early puberty in girls, delayed puberty in boys, constipation, fat tissue in breast area, gastro-esophageal reflux, stretch marks on hips, abdomen, and back, acanthosis nigricans etc.

Obesity in children cause complications may include asthma, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, sleeping disorders like sleep apnea, reproductive problems like hormonal imbalance and irregular menstruation, arthritis, high cholesterol, digestive problems, gall stones etc.

## Causes

The simplest explanation is that children, like adults, become obese when they consume more calories than their bodies can burn, a condition known as "energy imbalance." This can be caused by a variety of factors including genetics, hormones, metabolic make-up, and medical issues.

## Behavioral factors

These could consist of eating and drinking high-calorie, low-nutrient fare such as fast food, snacks, sweets, and soda; excess food consumption; sitting down too much to watch TV or use a computer, tablet, or phone; not getting enough exercise.

## Environmental factors

Environmental factors that can cause obesity include lack of convenient access to nutritious eating options, being fed high-calorie, low-nutrient meals frequently, lack of sufficient opportunities for exercise, lack of accessibility to secure playgrounds, parks, or other recreation facilities, little to no family or friends to play and exercise with, exposure to targeted marketing that encourages a sedentary lifestyle, fast meals, and junk food.

## Genetic factors

If at least one parent is obese, a child is more likely to develop obesity. A number of uncommon genetic diseases can make children obese by altering how fat is stored in the body or by generating persistent hunger that leads to binge eating. These consist of prader-willi syndrome, pro-opiomelanocortin deficiency, leptin receptor deficiency, bardet-biedl syndrome.

## Psychological factors

A child's risk of obesity is increased by stress, anxiety, and sadness. Including some adults, children have learnt to eat too much to distract themselves from or distract themselves from unpleasant emotions like loneliness, stress, sadness and boredom.

## Socioeconomic factors

Numerous studies demonstrate that people in low-income areas frequently lack access to supermarkets that sell fresh fruit and vegetables, living instead in "food deserts" where they can only purchase packaged food, fast food, and prepared foods that have undergone extensive processing. Financial difficulty can also have an impact on eating choices because fast food and high-calorie foods are frequently less expensive than fresher, healthier foods that cost more. Low-income residents may also lack access to secure exercise facilities or the spare time and energy to engage in physical activity.

## Medications

Several classes of medications can promote weight gain and hence lead to obesity include Steroids, Antidepressants, Medications for diabetes, such as thiazolidinediones, sulfonylureas, and insulin, Anti-seizure drugs such as valproate and carbamazepine.

## Diagnosis

When a child's BMI is at or above the 95th percentile of the CDC's sex-specific BMI-for-age growth charts, it can be determined that the child is obese. In addition to BMI and charting weight on the growth charts, the physician evaluates any health issues or symptoms the kid is having connected to weight, obesity running in the family, exercise level, dietary practices, sleep habits, psychological or mental conditions, results of a

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physical examination, including vital indicators like heart rate and blood pressure. Physician might order blood test may include blood sugar test, cholesterol test, thyroid function, hormone levels etc.

### Treatment

The physician can treat obesity in children who suggest lifestyle changes, prefer some medications to treat obesity such as orlistat, metformin, liraglutide etc. For severe obese adolescents, the physician suggests the weight loss surgery (bariatric surgery), sleeve gastrectomy, gastric bypass etc.

### Prevention

To prevent the excessive weight gain in children may follows:

**Have healthy snacks available:** Options include whole-grain cereal with low-fat milk, fruits with low-fat yoghurt, baby carrots with hummus, and air-popped popcorn without butter.

**Offer new foods multiple times:** If youngster doesn't like a new cuisine right away, don't give up. A food typically requires several exposures before it is accepted.

**Be sure your child gets enough sleep:** According to certain studies, obesity risk may be increased by getting insufficient sleep.

**Adequate exercise:** Physical activity helps children's bones and muscles grow stronger, aids in their ability to fall asleep and get quality sleep and can increase their mood and energy levels in

addition to helping them burn calories. Experts advise children to engage in 150 to 300 minutes of moderately strenuous physical activity each week. This can take many different forms, such dancing in your living room or heading outside for a hike or game of tag. Other options include slipping around the house in your socks. Other well-liked activities include roller skating, rollerblading, swimming, biking, playing hide-and-seek, jumping rope, and running races on foot or by bike, dance or martial arts classes.

**Be careful with sugary drinks:** Fruit juice and sodas can fill up your child and make it difficult for them to eat the foods that will keep them healthy and content in between meals because they are rich in calories, low in nutrients, and filling. Serve milk, water, seltzer, or diluted fruit juice as an alternative.

**Limit take out and eating out:** The sodium and fat content of restaurant food is frequently high, which can increase the risk of obesity and high blood pressure. They are frequently served in quantities must larger than a child needs.

**Eat together for family meals:** At mealtimes, try to stay away from the TV, computer, and video games as they can encourage overeating and divert children's attention from their fullness signals. Set an example of thoughtful, healthy eating by concentrating on and savouring your meals.

**Others:** It may include don't force them to clean their plate, good sleep, teach stress relieving practices, limit screen time, be consistent, practice positive messaging etc.