

Obesity and Children: Helping Your Child Lose Weight

If my child is heavy now, will he or she always have a weight problem?

Not all heavy children have weight problems as adults. However, as children get older, their risk for staying overweight goes up. The risk is even higher if one or both parents also are overweight. It's important to catch weight problems early.

Could my child's weight problem be caused by hormones?

Most overweight children don't have a hormone imbalance. Children with a hormone imbalance grow slower than other children. They often have other symptoms, too, like tiredness, constipation or dry skin. If your child has these symptoms, talk with your doctor.

How can I help my child lose weight?

The best way to lose weight is to eat healthier and to exercise more. As a parent, you can help your child do both. Talk to your doctor about the best ways for your child to lose weight. Be patient--it may take a long time. Don't limit how much food your child can eat--instead, offer food that is healthier. At the same time, don't focus too much on his or her weight. Make sure you praise your child for his or her strengths. This builds self-esteem.

How can I help my child to eat healthier?

Get the whole family involved in healthy eating. It will be good for everyone, and your child won't feel like he or she is being singled out. Ask your doctor or a dietitian to teach you how to read food labels. When you go to the grocery store, look at the food labels

and try to buy foods that are high in fiber and low in fat. If your child is over 2 years old and drinks whole milk, switch to skim milk. Skim milk doesn't have any fat in it. Have your child eat all meals and snacks at the dinner table.

How can I help my child exercise more?

- Limit TV time.
- Have your child play games with other children. They can play tag, have foot races, go skating or play basketball.
- If you have a pet, it can be your child's job to take it out for exercise every day.
- Get the whole family to go for a walk or a bike ride.
- See if your child would like to join a school or community sports team.

Can medicine help my child lose weight?

No diet medicines are safe for children.

This handout provides a general overview on this topic and may not apply to everyone. To find out if this handout applies to you and to get more information on this subject, talk to your family doctor.