



# PARENT HEALTH BULLETIN



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## THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: CHILDHOOD OBESITY



About 1 in 5 children in the United States has obesity, that's 19% of children. In Kentucky, 23.8% of youths ages 10 to 17 have obesity, ranking Kentucky No. 1 in the United States for childhood obesity. The concern is that children with obesity are at higher risk for having other chronic health conditions and diseases, such as asthma, sleep apnea, bone and joint problems, and Type 2 diabetes. They also have more risk factors for heart disease like high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

### Defining childhood obesity

A child or youth qualify as either being overweight or obese based on their Body Mass Index (BMI). BMI uses height and weight measurements to estimate a person's body fat.

**On a standard BMI chart, kids age 2 to 19 fall into one of four categories:**

- **Underweight:** BMI below the 5th percentile
- **Normal weight:** BMI at the 5th and less than the 85th percentile

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## *Children ages 6 through 17 years should get a minimum of 60 minutes of physical activity a day.*



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- **Overweight:** BMI at the 85th and below 95th percentiles
- **Obese:** BMI at or above 95th percentile

### Why do kids become overweight or obese?

According to the CDC, childhood obesity is influenced by many factors including eating and physical activity behaviors, genetics, metabolism, family and home environment, and community and social factors. Lifestyle choices like eating high-calorie, low-nutrient foods and beverages, having a poor sleep routine, and not getting enough physical activity increase a child's risk of being overweight or obese.

### Prevent childhood obesity

The good news is that you can prevent childhood obesity. Take small steps as a family to make healthy changes together and help your child maintain a healthy weight.

- **As a parent, set a good example.** Make healthy eating and regular physical activity a family affair. Everyone will benefit, and no one will feel singled out. Children ages 6 through 17 years should get a minimum of 60 minutes of physical activity a day.

- **Develop healthy eating habits** by providing plenty of vegetables, fruits, and whole-grain products. Encourage your family to drink lots of water and limit sugary sweetened beverages.
- **Be sure your child gets enough sleep.** Some studies indicate that too little sleep may increase the risk of obesity. Sleep deprivation can cause hormonal imbalances that lead to increased appetite.
- **Reduce sedentary time**, like screen time (time spent on the computer, watching TV, or playing video games) to 2 hours or less a day.

Talk to kids about the importance of eating well and being active. You should NOT place children on a weight reduction diet without consulting a health-care provider. If you're worried about your child's weight status, take your child or teen to see the doctor.

#### REFERENCES:

- <https://stateofchildhoodobesity.org/states/ky>
- <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/obesity-prevention-source/obesity-definition/defining-childhood-obesity>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/features/childhood-obesity>

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