

## **Childhood Obesity/ Body Mass Index**

Start by scheduling a visit to determine your child's accurate height and weight. Weight changes are the direct result of the amount of calories consumed and the amount of calories used by the body. If you eat more calories than you burn you will gain weight. If you burn more calories than you eat, you will lose weight. The problem is easy to understand, but the solutions are complex and involve coordinated efforts by health care workers, parents, teachers and kids.

Because it is difficult for overweight children and adolescents to lose weight and even more difficult for them to sustain long-term weight loss, the ultimate goal must be prevention of childhood obesity.

### **DIETARY GUIDELINES**

Eat a variety of foods every day. Balance the food you eat with physical activity to maintain or improve weight. Choose a diet with plenty of grain products, vegetables and fruits. Grain products supply energy and provide vitamins, minerals and fiber. Fruits and vegetables provide vitamins and minerals and are naturally low in fat and high in fiber. Lean meats, poultry and fish supply protein, vitamins, and iron. Dried beans and peas, eggs and nuts are also in this food group. Dairy products provide protein, vitamins, minerals and calcium. Choose skim milk and low-fat cheeses and yogurts often. To reduce your risk of heart disease, choose a diet low in fat, saturated fat and cholesterol. Eat sweets sparingly and moderate your salt intake.

You can change your child's risk of being overweight by immediately starting some healthy lifestyle habits. Ask your health care provider about resources in your community to help you plan and carry out a healthy lifestyle for you and your family.

### **SOME HEALTH RISKS OF CHILDHOOD OBESITY**

- High blood pressure
- High blood cholesterol
- Type 2 (non-insulin dependent) diabetes
- Insulin resistance, glucose intolerance
- Accelerated pubertal and skeletal development
- Orthopedic disorders
- Depression
- Eating disorders
- Distorted body image
- Low self-esteem

### **Childhood Obesity Resources**

- [www.healthycarolinians.org](http://www.healthycarolinians.org)
- [www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com](http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com)

- [www.hwrfc.org](http://www.hwrfc.org)
- [www.nchealthyweight.com](http://www.nchealthyweight.com)
- [www.getkidsinaction.com](http://www.getkidsinaction.com)
- [www.ncpreventionpartners.org](http://www.ncpreventionpartners.org)
- [www.nchealthyschools.org](http://www.nchealthyschools.org)

The information contained on this web site should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your health care provider. There may be variations in treatment that your provider may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

### **AIM FOR A HEALTHY WEIGHT**

- Talk with your health care provider about your ideal weight to improve your long-term health.
- Many children can maintain their weight but decrease their BMI as they grow taller rather than losing weight.
- If weight loss is needed, do so gradually 1/2 to 2 pounds per week.

### **BE ACTIVE**

- Keep physically active to balance the calories you eat.
- Be physically active for at least 30 minutes (adults) or 60 minutes (children) on most days of the week.
- Limit TV, video game, and computer time to less than 2 hours per day.

### **EAT WELL**

- Select sensible and appropriate for age portion sizes for food and beverages.
- Prepare and eat more meals at home.
- Drink at least 8 glasses of water per day and limit sweetened beverages.
- Most people need to increase their servings of whole grain, fruit, and vegetables.
- Include snacks daily and choose healthy ones such as fresh fruit, yogurt, nuts or raw vegetables.