

How To Tell If Your Child Is At A Healthy Weight

Finding out your child's BMI can be a useful first step in learning whether he or she is at a healthy weight.



Almost one-third of children in our country are considered overweight or obese, but it can be confusing for parents to understand what that means, especially when your child seems healthy and active. How can you really tell if your child is at a healthy weight?

A helpful screening tool is body mass index (BMI), calculated using a child's weight and height, as well as his or her age and sex. You can use the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's children and adolescent online BMI calculator at <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/dnpabmi/>. Then, it's important to discuss the results with your doctor.

Being overweight or obese can increase your child's risk for high blood pressure, diabetes, sleep apnea and other conditions.

Next, try these tips to help your child maintain a healthy diet and stay physically active:

Control portion sizes. Average portion sizes have increased over the past several decades and many children are eating much larger portions—and more calories—than they need to maintain a healthy weight. Learn more about portion sizes versus serving sizes at <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/downloads/tip-portion-size.pdf>.

Think about your drink. Many beverages, such as regular soda and sports drinks, provide children with more calories than you may realize. Encourage your children to reach for water or fat-free or low-fat milk. A tip sheet showing the levels of sugar and calories in

many children's (and adults') favorite drinks is available at <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/downloads/tip-sugar-in-drinks.pdf>.

Vary your child's physical activities. Just like adults, children can get bored with the same old routine. Try organizing backyard tug-of-war or hosting a dance party to keep your kids excited about physical activity. More ideas are available at <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/downloads/tip-eat-healthy.pdf>.

Track screen time. To encourage physical activity, limit children's screen time to less than two hours a day, unless it's homework related. Help your children learn just how much time they spend with media by tracking it with the screen time log at <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/downloads/screen-time-log.pdf>.

Learn More

For more ways to encourage physical activity, as well as eat right and reduce screen time, visit **We Can!** (Ways to Enhance Children's Activity & Nutrition)[®] at <http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov>. Developed by the National Institutes of Health, **We Can!** provides parents, caregivers and communities with free tips, tools and guidance to help children ages 8–13 maintain a healthy weight by improving food choices, increasing physical activity and reducing screen time.

Full text available at <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/news-events/matte-articles.htm>

We Can! is a program from the National Institutes of Health that offers resources for parents, caregivers and communities to help children 8-13 years old stay at a healthy weight through eating right, increasing physical activity, and reducing screen time.

To learn more, go to <http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov> or call 1-866-35-WE CAN.

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