

# Healthy, Wealthy, and Wise

Cooperative Extension Allegany & Cattaraugus County



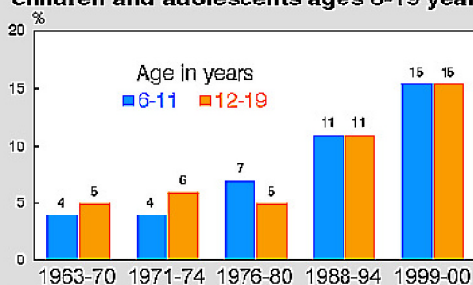
## Children & Obesity

Obese children are children who are 20% or more over their ideal weight

### What determines whether a child is obese?

- ☞ Compare the child's height to weight ratio with those of same-age, same-sex peers.
- ☞ Have a health care provider perform an abdominal skin-fold test, to determine the amount of fat tissue.
- ☞ Have your pediatrician calculate your child's Body Mass Index.

Figure 1. Prevalence of overweight among children and adolescents ages 6-19 years



NOTES: Excludes pregnant women starting with 1974-74. Pregnancy status not available for 1983-85 and 1986-70. Data for 1983-85 are for children 6-11 years of age; data for 1986-70 are for adolescents 12-17 years of age, not 12-19 years.  
SOURCE: CDC/NCHS, NHES and NHANES.

### What causes obesity in children?

- ☞ Obesity develops from many causes, but the main one is when the amount of energy consumed through calories of food is greater than the energy spent through physical activity.
- ☞ Excess calories are stored as fat, and if too much body fat builds up, weight gain develops.

## Health Consequences

### Asthma

Children that are obese and have asthma use more medicine, wheeze more, and go to the emergency room more frequently than their non-obese peers.

### Type 2 Diabetes

Studies link obesity in children to an increase in Type 2 Diabetes, which can cause blindness, heart and kidney disease, and loss of limbs.

### High Blood Pressure

High Blood Pressure has been found more commonly in obese children when compared to their non-obese peers.

### Sleep Apnea

In a study of obese children it was found that one third of these children had symptoms like those of sleep apnea, which can ultimately cause decreased learning and memory functions.

### Mental Health

Obesity has been linked to low self-esteem in some adolescents. Those with low self-esteem also reported increased rates of loneliness, sadness and more likely to report smoking and drinking alcohol.

### Adult Obesity

About 50% of children and adolescents who are obese will become obese adults.

# What Can Parents Do?

Don't be alarmed when your child starts gaining weight. It is common for a child to gain weight before a growth spurt and body shape changes are part of development. The best thing to do is make sure your child is fit.

## Help your child stay healthy:

### \* Lead by example

Adopt healthy eating habits.

If parents are overweight or

obese, children are more likely to be obese also. With everyone eating healthy, parents can improve eating habits of children.

### \* Prepare a heart-healthy diet for the entire family

Try and cut back on the child's consumption of fast food and processed or packaged foods, and also give them more fruits and vegetables.

### \* Get the entire family involved in physical activities

Exercising as a family can be fun for all! Keep in mind that a children's natural activity pattern is in short bursts rather than sustained periods.

### \* Leave the child in control of his/her eating as much as possible

Anorexia can develop in young people who struggle with gaining a sense of control. Avoid struggles over food.

### \* Praise the child as he/she begins to lose weight

Be careful and avoid criticism of their weight or eating habits.

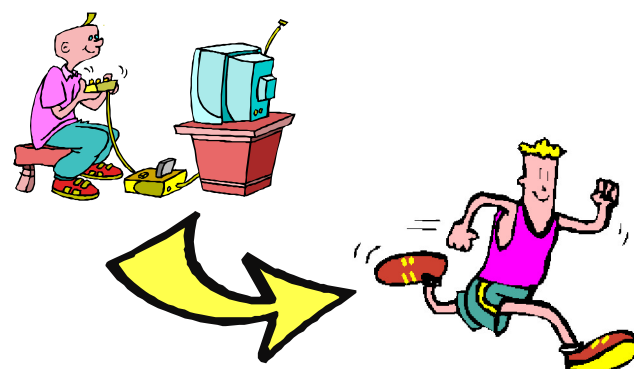
### \* Love them no matter what!

Make sure  
your child is  
**FIT!**

# Risk factors for becoming obese

To lessen the risk of a child being obese, take into account the following:

- ✗ Parents' mass index (BMI). It is known that obesity in parents can lead to obesity in children by genetics and the shared environment.
- ✗ Total food intake
- ✗ Calories from protein
- ✗ Calories from fat
- ✗ Sedentary lifestyle (such as playing video games or watching television for an extended period of time) rather than playing or exercising.



## For more information on :

Cardiovascular Disease

Physical Fitness

High Blood Pressure

Cholesterol

Healthy Eating Habits

Please Contact:

Cornell Cooperative Extension

Allegany & Cattaraugus County at

1-800-897-9189 ext. 122

[www.cce.cornell.edu/allegany-cattaraugus](http://www.cce.cornell.edu/allegany-cattaraugus)

Information for this fact sheet provided by National Center for  
Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion  
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