



NATIONAL CHILDHOOD OBESITY AWARENESS MONTH

September is National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month, which is a time to highlight one of the most prevalent public health challenges that children are facing today. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that nearly 1 in 5 children in the United States are affected by obesity. Childhood obesity conditions can potentially lead to other chronic conditions later in life such as type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and an increased risk for heart disease. Awareness, education, and commitment to a healthier lifestyle for your child can prevent and combat childhood obesity.

WHAT IS CHILDHOOD OBESITY AND ITS CAUSE?

Childhood obesity is a medical condition where a child has a significant amount of excess body weight that causes negative effects on the child's health and well-being. It can be measured and diagnosed through Body Mass Index (BMI) that is compared to a standard growth chart based on their height, weight, age and gender. A child is considered overweight when their BMI is in the 85th percentile but below the 95th, and obese when their BMI is in the 95th percentile or above.

Childhood Obesity has many different causations, and usually is a result of multiple different factors. Some of these causations could be:

- Unhealthy eating habits
- Poor sleeping habits
- Lack of exercise and movement
- Genetics
- Metabolism
- Family history
- Other health and physical conditions
- Excessive screen time
- Environmental and economic factors





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WHAT CAN WE DO?

Parents and caregivers can play a crucial role in the prevention of childhood obesity. Small and consistent changes at home can make big differences when it comes to your child's health. The changes we can make will help to prevent and even reverse the effect of childhood obesity to ensure that your child stays healthy and happy. Here are some actions you can take to prioritize your child's health and be a part of the fight against childhood obesity:

1. MEET WITH DOCTORS AND DIETITIANS

- Regularly meet with your doctor or physician for a proper assessments such as yearly physicals. Consider meeting with a dietitian to get your child's nutrition on track.

2. BUILD BALANCED MEALS AND LIMIT UNNECESSARY SNACKING

- Make sure each one of your child's meals includes protein, whole grains, fruits and vegetables, and healthy fats. You can use the MyPlate Diagram as a template.
- Try and limit unnecessary snacking, stick to 1 snack per day and focus more on meal time
- Practice portion control

3. CUT BACK ON SUGARY DRINKS

- Sodas, juices, and sports drinks add excess calories and unwanted sugars
- Try adding fruit in water for added flavor and nutrients
- Sparkling water with a splash of 100% fruit juice for a fun soda alternative

4. ENCOURAGE DAILY MOVEMENT

- Kids should get at least 60min of physical activity per day
- Walk or bike to and from school
- Family walks after dinner
- Go to the park with friends
- Make time for outdoor playtime
- Join town organized sports teams or take classes at the YMCA!

5. CREATE A POSITIVE FOOD ENVIRONMENT

- Keep fruit out and in reach and healthier snack options
- Avoid using food for rewards and punishments
- Make family meal time a priority
- Involve your child in cooking and meal prep



Meadowlands YMCA

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