

Fit for a Kid: Information & Answers for Parents

Why is overweight a problem?

Overweight children and adolescents are at risk for health problems during their youth and as adults. Studies have shown that overweight youth are at greater risk of developing cardiovascular disease including high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and Type 2 diabetes. They are also more likely to become obese as adults. One study found that eight out of ten children who were overweight at age 10–15 years were obese adults at age 25. Another study found that one fourth of obese adults were overweight as children. The study also showed that if overweight begins before eight years of age, obesity in adulthood is likely to be more severe.

Is it a problem that I should be concerned about?

Ottawa County, like the rest of the nation, is faced with the challenge of reducing rates of obesity among children. Although it was suspected that local childhood obesity rates would follow national trends, until 2005, there was no information to verify this. During the 2004-2005 school year, the Ottawa County Health Department conducted a Body Mass Index (BMI) screening. During this project, height and weight measurements were taken of approximately 2,600 pre-kindergarten, 3rd and 6th graders. The results of this screening found that 15% of the children tested were overweight and 17% were at risk for becoming overweight according to national standards.

How do I know if my child is overweight?

One of the best places to find out if your child is overweight or at risk for becoming obese is your family doctor. Your doctor can help you examine Body Mass Index (BMI) scores, family risk factors, and lifestyle to determine if your child is at risk. You can also find your child's BMI scores using the calculator found on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website. Visit www.cdc.gov and search "BMI". Even if your child is not overweight, it is important to encourage healthy eating and activity in every child. The information contained in this packet is beneficial for all kids and families.

Where do I start?

Teaching your child about healthy eating and the benefits of physical activity is something everyone can do. There is a great deal of information available on the internet, in books and in magazines. Regardless of the source, the key is eating a variety of healthy, appropriately portioned foods and participating in physical activity. It sounds easy, right? We realize that finding healthy foods that your child will eat can be a struggle. Plus, finding affordable and safe opportunities for exercise can be difficult in an already busy lifestyle. The information in this packet is aimed at helping you to find realistic options for a building a healthy family.



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