

Let's Talk ABOUT...

The most common health issue facing American children is being overweight. Health risks associated with being overweight include high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, liver disease, sleep apnea, depression, anxiety, joint problems, and many other health problems. Unless steps are taken to become healthier, most overweight and obese children will continue to be overweight and obese as adults. Adult obesity is associated with serious health conditions including heart disease, stroke, diabetes, arthritis, high blood pressure, some cancers, liver disease, and a shorter life span.

What causes obesity?

Eating too many calories and not getting enough physical activity causes obesity. Some families are more prone to weight gain than others, but the cause is still the same and can be prevented and managed.

Is my child's weight not normal?

The first step to evaluate and manage weight problems is to identify the risk category. A risk category tells the problems your child might have due to their weight.

First, your child's height and weight is measured. Then the height and weight are put on a growth curve and a BMI percentile-for-age chart. A growth curve tells if a child is growing at the normal rate. BMI stands for Body Mass Index. This is a number that tells how much body fat a person has. It helps tell if a person may have health problems from their weight. Larger numbers mean a person has more body fat. Smaller numbers mean a person has less body fat.

BMI-for-age percentile shows how your child's weight compares to other children of the same age and sex. For example, a BMI-for-age percentile of 65% means that of every 100 children, 65 weigh less

Weight management

than that child. Children and adolescents constantly grow and so their BMI number changes all the time, too. If the BMI percentile is between 85 and 95 then the child is overweight. If the BMI percentile number is 95 or more the child is obese. We do not use BMI for children younger than 2 years. Instead we use the weight-for-length measurement. If the infant is greater than 95 on this measure, then they are overweight.

If BMI-for-age is...	Then child is categorized as...
85th percentile or lower	Not overweight
85th to 95th percentile	Overweight
95th percentile or higher	Obese

What can I do to help my child?

While it is difficult to make changes, there are several programs to help give you support and ideas. Many changes are free and some even save money. For example you can stop buying soda pop or take regular family walks. Below are some ideas and programs available to help get your family started along a pathway to a healthier weight.

- **Talk to your pediatrician.** Many pediatricians can help you and your child make healthier choices. They can help to motivate and set goals. Then when you visit the doctor, they can follow-up on your goals and see how you are doing. They also know other resources available in your community.
- **Search online!**
 - Intermountain Healthcare has a program to help children, teens, and parents with weight management. It is called the Intermountain LiVe Well program. It has many FREE online resources, healthy habit

ideas, and other great weight management tools. There are also links to community resources such as recreation centers and community centers.

Go to: <http://intermountainlive.org>

- The LiVe Well program teaches about 8 Healthy Habits that are a great place to start. These 8 areas will have the biggest impact on your weight, health and overall outlook on life.

Free LiVe Well app for phones (iPhone, iPad, or Android devices) to help track activity and eating goals.

- KidsHealth has partnered with Primary Children's Medical Center and provides lots of FREE information about child and teen health and fitness.

Go to: <http://kidshealth.org/>

- The USDA (government agency) helps promote healthy habits and recently developed the www.ChooseMyplate.gov website. My Plate helps remind you how to eat healthfully. There are several ideas on this website about how much of each food group should be on your plate, how to eat healthier foods, menu ideas, and recipes for cooking healthy foods. There are also several free resources.

Go to: www.ChooseMyplate.gov

- Intermountain has a *Let's Talk About... Food Choices for Good Health* handout which describes the Traffic Light Style of eating and includes helpful information about foods that are good to eat.

- **Go to a class!**

Intermountain LiVe Well: Healthy Habits for Kids classes. These classes are available throughout Utah and cover topics such as nutrition and physical activity. There is a charge, but depending on your health insurance, most of the money may be reimbursed!

Go to: <http://intermountainlive.org> for more information.

- **Try it!** Start with a simple changes such as the 5, 2, 1, 0 Every Day program (www.letsgo.org):
 - 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables
 - 2 hours or less of recreational screen time (TV, videogames, computers)
 - 1 hour or more of physical activity (Exercise)
 - 0 sugary drinks. Drink more water and low fat milk instead.

Is it possible?

Yes it is! Getting to a healthier weight and forming healthy eating habits are possible! Many of the websites above have examples of kids and teens that have lost weight using these programs. Losing weight will help your child feel better and be a healthier adult.

References:

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