

# Childhood Obesity: A Preventable Epidemic

Obesity is an epidemic in America. It is linked to many serious health conditions and is the second leading **preventable** cause of death in the U.S., only behind tobacco use. Obesity rates in children have tripled in the last 30 years. A third of New York's children are obese or overweight. But the good news is that obesity is preventable.



**September is National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month, a time to highlight and spread awareness of this major public health problem that affects nearly 1 in 5 children in the U.S.**

## What is obesity?

Obesity is defined as having excess body fat. It is measured by body mass index (BMI), a weight-to-height ratio used to diagnose obesity and monitor healthy weight.

## What are the risks?

Obesity is linked to asthma, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, high cholesterol and other serious health conditions.

## What causes obesity in children?

- ✓ Diets high in fats and sugars, like fast food
- ✓ Lack of physical activity and increased screen time
- ✓ Poor sleeping habits
- ✓ Metabolism (your body's ability to convert food into energy)
- ✓ Genetics and/or medical conditions

## What does the data tell us?

- ✓ Obesity often begins early in life.
- ✓ Children with obesity are likely to become overweight adults.
- ✓ Black, Hispanic, and low-income white children are more likely to drink more than one sugary drink a day.

## Obesity is preventable

Schools and policymakers have a role in supporting healthy habits in children. But what we do as individuals is extremely important. Children learn from their parents!

## Be a role model

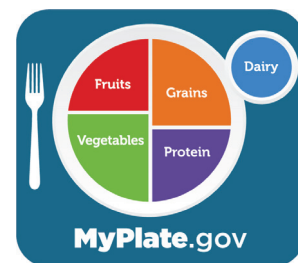
If your child sees you engaging in healthy habits like exercising and making better food choices, they will feel encouraged to do the same.

**Encourage physical activity** that burns calories.

**Limit screen time** to no more than 2 hours a day.

## Think calories.

- ✓ A child 11 to 12 years old needs 1,800 to 2,200 calories per day.
- ✓ Just one cheeseburger with fries is 1,200 calories!
- ✓ Make sure your children eat fruits and vegetables.
- ✓ Limit sugary drinks heavily.



**Need ideas for balanced diets? Visit [MyPlate.gov](http://MyPlate.gov).**



**Healthcare • Education • Action!**

**Schedule an appointment with your child's physician, if you think your child may be overweight. Visit [Health.NY.gov](http://Health.NY.gov) for more guidance and helpful tips.**