

PARENT HEALTH BULLETIN



Pinellas County Health Department

*Volume 3
Number 1*

Your child needs your guidance!

You worry about your children falling or breaking a bone, about them catching the flu, or even about their safety to and from school, but do you worry about heart disease and diabetes...at their age? Yes!

Childhood obesity is on the rise. 15% of children and adolescents ages 6-19 are overweight. This is double of what children were only ten years ago.

Why are so many children overweight?

The same reasons that adults are overweight: not enough physical activity and eating too much of the wrong things. These days, children are spending more time watching television, playing videogames, and sitting at the computer. Children are eating fast food and drinking soda more than ever before. The combination of too many calories and too little physical activity leads to overweight and obese kids.



Obese and overweight children are at an increased risk for:

- ♥ Type 2 diabetes
- ♥ High cholesterol and blood pressure levels, which are risk factors for heart disease.
- ♥ Breathing problems such as asthma and sleep apnea (interrupted breathing while sleeping). In some cases this can lead to problems with learning and memory.

Teach your kids to make smart decisions when it comes to choosing healthy foods and getting physical activity.

5 Healthy Eating Tips

- ♥ **Always eat breakfast.** This is the most important meal of the day. Make it count!
- ♥ **Add some fiber.** Fruits, vegetables and whole grains (ex: brown rice, wheat bread) can help your child concentrate better than simple carbohydrates (sugars, white bread, etc.)
- ♥ **Include some vegetables with your child's favorite meals.** This way they get what they like and also what they need. Tip: try putting some fruit on a stick to make healthy eating more interesting!
- ♥ **If you eat out, visit www.pinellaswellness.com.** At this website you can find restaurants that have been approved by the Health Department for having healthy kids menus.



ASK A HEALTH PROFESSIONAL

I think that my child is overweight. How do I know what is a healthy weight for him?

Body mass index, BMI, is a tool used to determine if a person is a healthy weight, overweight, or underweight. BMI is a formula calculated using height and weight. Your doctor can help find out your child's BMI and determine what is a healthy weight for him. Also, you can go to the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services website at

www.cdc.gov/growthcharts. This website has BMI charts for boys and girls ages 2 - 20 from 18 to 250 pounds. You should know your child's BMI. We consider it the "new vital sign". Ask your doctor about you child's BMI at your next visit.

BMI

$$\text{BMI} = \frac{\text{weight in pounds}}{\text{height in inches} \times 703}$$

If you have a question for a health professional, please write to:
Pinellas County Health Dept.
Office of Chronic Disease Prevention
205 Dr. Martin Luther King St. North
St. Petersburg, FL 33701

For more information about child obesity, please visit the following websites:

www.nih.gov

www.eatright.org

www.aap.org

www.cdc.gov

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