



Childhood Obesity

Protecting your children from the health risks of obesity

Over the last 25 years, obesity rates among children and youth in Canada have nearly tripled. This represents a troubling statistic as excess weight has many negative effects on children's health.

Did you know?

The over-consumption of sugar-sweetened drinks is linked to childhood obesity

To help children maintain a healthy body weight, *Canada's Food Guide* recommends limiting their intake of soft drinks and other sweetened beverages. Encourage them to quench their thirst with water.

With excessive weight gain, kids are at higher risk of developing a range of health problems in childhood and in their later years, including:

physical health:

- ❖ hypertension, high blood pressure or heart disease;
- ❖ Type-2 diabetes;
- ❖ sleep apnea and other breathing problems;
- ❖ abnormal or missed menstrual cycles;
- ❖ bone and joint problems; and
- ❖ reduced balance.

emotional health:

- ❖ low self-esteem and negative body image; and
- ❖ depression.

social health:

- ❖ feeling judged;
- ❖ and being teased or bullied.

Weight problems in childhood are likely to persist into their adult years. Teenagers who are obese have an 80% chance of remaining obese as adults.

Help your child maintain a healthy weight – tips for parents

Help your child eat healthy foods

By following Canada's Food Guide, your family will be able to meet their energy and nutrient needs. As a parent, set a good example for your children by being a role model for healthy eating. Start by having meals together as a family as often as possible.

Help your child be physically active

- ❖ Children and teenagers should participate in at least 60 or more minutes of physical activity most days of the week. This can include walking to and from school, participating in sports or riding a bike. Support your child by setting a good example.
- ❖ Try to add physical activity to your daily routine and encourage your children to join you. Also, it's important for you to decrease the amount of time your children currently spend on sedentary activities; limit their screen time of television, video games and web surfing to no more than two hours per day.

Why the rise in obesity rates?

A number of factors contribute to rising rates of overweight and obese Canadian children. Conditions in homes, schools and the community play an important role in shaping individual diets and physical activity patterns.

What can my family do?

Be aware of the opportunities your community offers to help your family stay healthy.

- ❖ Are there bike paths nearby?
- ❖ Are there places to buy nutritious foods in your neighborhood?
- ❖ What community programs are available throughout the year?
- ❖ Involve children in choosing foods at the grocery store by teaching them how to use the [Nutrition Facts table](#).

Healthy eating and physical activity go hand-in-hand. Bring a Frisbee or a soccer ball to your next picnic! Get ideas on how to be active as a family by visiting [Canada's Physical Activity Guide for Families](#).

- ❖ Keep your fridge stocked with foods from all four food groups in [Canada's Food Guide](#).
- ❖ What you buy is what you and your family will eat. Start by making [wise food choices](#) when you shop.

The links to the "Table of Nutritional Value", to the "Canada Food Guide" as well as to all the other informative documents mentioned in this leaflet can be easily found in its digital version at <http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/kids/childhood-obesity/>.

This document is available in French, English, Chinese, Spanish, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Vietnamese, Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Tamil, Greek, Italian, Dari (Farsi) and Arabic.

Ce document est disponible en français, anglais, chinois, espagnol, créole haïtien, portugais, roumain, russe, vietnamien, hindi, urdu, pendjabi, tamoul, grec, italien, dari (farsi) et arabe.

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