

HEALTH AND FITNESS

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Tips To Help Children Lose Weight



Obesity rates among children have risen dramatically over the last several decades. According to the World Obesity Atlas 2026, the obesity rate among school-aged children increased from 4 percent in 1975 to nearly 20 percent in 2022. Many kids are even dealing with being overweight before they're old enough to enter school, as the American Society for the Positive Care of Children reports that approximately one in 10 four- and five-year-olds is overweight.

Being overweight or obese in childhood poses a significant threat. The Mayo Clinic notes that extra weight in childhood often puts children on a path to diabetes and high blood pressure. The effects also can be more immediate, as childhood obesity can contribute to poor self-esteem and depression.

Parents concerned about their children's short- and long-term health can employ various strategies to help their kids lose extra weight.

- Recognize the potential causes of childhood obesity. The Mayo Clinic notes that childhood obesity is a complex condition that can be caused by a range of variables, including some that are beyond kids' and parents' control. Some cases of childhood obesity may be linked to genetic and hormonal factors, while others may be a byproduct of socioeconomic variables, including lack of access to nutritious foods, which are not always readily available in low-income neighborhoods. But lifestyle factors, including eating too frequently, and eating unhealthy foods during meals and between meals, also play a role. A lack of regular physical activity also increases the chances kids will put on extra weight.

- Encourage healthy eating habits. The ASPCC notes that parents can help to prevent childhood obesity by ensuring kids have access to healthy meals and snacks. The Mayo Clinic urges parents to limit kids' access to fast food, baked goods and vending machine snacks, each of which tend to be high in added sugars, saturated fat and sodium. Consumption of sugary drinks like sodas, fruit juices and sports drinks also should be limited.

- Set a good example. Children, and particularly school-aged youngsters, tend to mimic their parents' behavior. Parents can use that to their advantage as they combat overweight and obesity in their children by reaching for healthy snacks between meals and serving reasonable portions of nutritious foods at mealtime. Parents can forgo snacking on potato chips and other processed snack foods in favor of fruits and vegetables.

- Encourage physical activity. The Mayo Clinic urges parents to encourage their children to get at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day. Spending hours each day watching television, playing video games or scrolling through social media increases the chances that kids will put on extra weight. The Mayo Clinic adds that advertisements that appear during television shows and on social media and other internet platforms may promote unhealthy foods. Finding time each day when kids can play outdoors can foster a love of physical activity that can help kids lose weight and maintain a healthy weight once they have shed extra pounds.

Obesity rates among children are on the rise, but parents can do a lot to help kids shed extra weight and keep that weight off over the long haul.

The Basics Of Bladder Infections

Maintenance of the urinary tract is vital to overall health. Notably, the main function of the urinary tract, according to Johns Hopkins Medicine, is to filter blood, make urine and remove liquid waste from the body. The urinary tract also keeps salt, water and chemical levels balanced in the body. But like other areas of the body, the urinary tract can be compromised by infection.

Understanding urinary tract infections

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says urinary tract infections (UTIs) account for roughly 2.7 million emergency department visits and 400,000 hospitalizations annually in the United States. UTIs are the most common outpatient infections, with women experiencing them in greater numbers than men. The CDC estimates between 50 and 80 percent of women will experience at least one UTI in their lifetimes, and about 30 to 40 percent of women who get a UTI will experience recurrence.

UTIs can impact any part of the urinary system. This includes the kidneys, ureters, bladder, and urethra. When a UTI is localized to the bladder, that is known as a bladder infection or cystitis. Bladder infections are the most common type of UTI, according to Sepsis Alliance.

Symptoms infection

Common symptoms of a bladder infection, which affects the lower urinary tract, can include the following:

- Pain or burning while urinating.
- A strong, constant urge to urinate, even right after emptying the bladder.
- Passing small amounts of urine frequently.
- Urine that is cloudy, dark, bloody, or foul-smelling.
- Cramping pains or pressure in the pelvis.

If these symptoms are accompanied by high fever and chills, pain in the lower back or side, or nausea and vomiting, that could indicate a more serious UTI that has spread to the kidneys.

Diagnosing the issue

A medical diagnosis will involve a doctor asking about symptoms and then running a urine test and culture to check for the presence of bacteria, according to the CDC. Prescription antibiotics and pain medication may be prescribed to clear the infection.

Bladder infections can be avoided with some simple steps, including:

- urinating promptly when the urge arrives
- taking showers instead of baths
- minimizing douches, sprays or powders in the genital area
- urinating before and after sexual activity
- wiping from front to back

Infections of the urinary tract are common and highly treatable.

What Parents Can Do To Help Kids Get A Better Night's Sleep

A good night's rest is invaluable. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, sufficient sleep bolsters the immune system, which in turn makes people less vulnerable to illness. The CDC also reports that getting enough sleep helps people maintain a healthy weight, reduces stress and improves mood, and strengthens attention and memory.

Parents know that getting kids to bed at night is no small task. However, kids have much to gain from a good night's rest, as the aforementioned benefits of sufficient sleep are certainly applicable to school-aged children. A stronger immune system means fewer sick days from school, and a healthy weight makes it easier for kids to get the 60 minutes of daily exercise recommended by childhood development experts. The attention- and memory-related benefits of sleep also help kids in the classroom.

Despite the benefits of a good night's rest, studies indicate children are not getting enough sleep, even if parents think they are. A 2025 study published in *Frontiers in Pediatrics* found that 83 percent of parents believed their child was getting enough sleep, but sleep trackers found that only 14 percent of the child participants were getting the amount of sleep recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

The Mayo Clinic notes that school-aged children between the ages of six and 12 need somewhere between nine and 12 hours of sleep per night, while teenagers are urged to get between eight and 10 hours of nightly rest. Parents concerned about their kids' sleeping habits can take a multifaceted approach to improve the quality and even duration of their children's sleep.

- Stay consistent with bedtime and wake time. A consistent sleep routine, which includes wake times each morning, can help ensure kids get enough rest each night. Try to keep kids in the same routine over the weekend, when kids do not need to wake up for school. As kids get older, this will become more difficult. But resist efforts to dramatically alter sleep schedules on the weekend, as that can adversely affect kids' sleep quality Sunday night into Monday morning.

- Turn devices off before bedtime and keep them off. Kidology Pediatrics in Michigan notes that electronic devices emit blue light that can interfere with the production of the sleep hormone melatonin. When kids use devices like smartphones and tablets close to bedtime, their bodies may not recognize it is time to sleep. That makes it hard to fall asleep and adversely affects the quality of sleep kids ultimately get. The Mayo Clinic recommends parents keep screens out of children's bedrooms, and the CDC advises turning electronic devices off at least 30 minutes before bedtime.

- Create sleep-friendly environments in children's bedrooms. In addition to keeping devices out of kids' bedrooms, parents can take other measures to make children's sleeping environments more conducive to quality rest. Bedrooms should be dark, cool and quiet, and ideally away from noisy areas in a home.

- Make beds exclusive to sleep. Creative kids can make it fun to play anywhere, but the Mayo Clinic recommends parents ensure children's beds are used only for sleeping. If kids are accustomed to playing with toys in their beds, that might make it harder for them to avoid doing so at bedtime.

When kids get enough quality sleep, they're less vulnerable to illness and in better position to perform well in the classroom. Parents can lean into various strategies to increase the chances their children get the quality sleep they need.



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