

childhood obesity

how physical therapists can help

“1 out of 5 children in the US is considered overweight or obese.”

how do i determine if my child is overweight or obese?

Your doctor or pediatrician determines whether or not your child is overweight by comparing your child's weight and height ratio to their age and growth patterns.

what causes obesity in children?

Some of the most common causes are: genetic factors, lack of physical activity, unhealthy eating patterns, or a combination of these factors. In rare cases being overweight is caused by a medical condition such as hormonal problems. A child's activity level and diet are one of the most important factors in determining a child's weight. Currently children spend an average of 4 hours a day watching television, gaming or using computers!



The boys in my classes at school call me “fatty” and pick on me for no reason.

“A child's activity level and diet are one of the most important factors in determining a child's weight.”

are obese or overweight children at greater risk for disease?

These children are at risk for high cholesterol, high blood pressure, early heart disease, diabetes, bone problems, and skin conditions. A study done tracking thousands of children through adulthood found that heavier children were twice as likely as the thinnest to die prematurely, before age 55, of either illness or a self-inflicted injury.

how can I help my overweight child?

- First, be supportive of your child. Often their feelings about themselves are based on your feelings about them.
- Accepting your child at any weight will help them feel good about themselves.
- Discuss your child's weight with them and allow them to share their concerns with you.
- Be a positive example! Go on a family walk, go biking, or swimming together. Engage your child in family game nights requiring movement.
- Evaluate the family diet. Decrease or eliminate sodas, chips, candy, fast food or processed meals. Try integrating a more balanced diet with fruits, vegetables and low fat protein options like chicken, fish or tofu.

how can a physical therapist help?

The physical therapist evaluates aerobic capacity, postural control, motor and sensory function, balance, endurance and gait. From the assessment the therapist develops a specialized plan/treatment focusing on safe/efficient movements, aligned posture, flexibility, balance, strength, and endurance. A home exercise program helps the family continue with the child's success and progress towards a healthy lifestyle.

Childhood Obesity Facts and Statistics

- ➔ One out of every seven low income children in America is obese.
- ➔ More than 70% of the obese youth are at higher risk of heart diseases.
- ➔ The hospital costs for children were 35 million in the 1980s and these have increased to 127 million today.
- ➔ Type 2 diabetes has reached to the levels of 8-9 %; a two-fold increase from the early 1980s.
- ➔ Obese children are at a higher risk of developing liver diseases, asthma and Sleep Apnea (problems in breathing while sleeping).
- ➔ Children with obesity have a low self-esteem and the chances of developing psychological problems like depression and anxiety are higher.
- ➔ Obese children have lesser concentration levels and get tired easily, which can pose challenges in their education and their participation in other extra-curricular activities.
- ➔ Obese children are subject to a lot of social discrimination and this may cause them to stay away from exercises and social interactions.
- ➔ Most of the people who complain of arthritis are middle-aged, but obese children are at the risk of developing this disease early on in their lives.
- ➔ Obesity also takes a toll on the financial health of a family as estimates suggest that a family with an obese child spends 30% more in health costs and 77% more in medication costs.



Meet the Therapist

Marie Schaffnit MPT specializes in pediatric physical therapy. At Pediatric Therapy Services, a team of SLP, OT's and PT's work together with families to create a therapy place where children learn, laugh and leap.

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