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Healthy weight for children

Children's weight

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Many things can affect your child's weight and growth.

These can include:

- genetics or hormones
- their birth weight
- how they were fed as a baby - whether they were breastfed or bottle-fed
- their mobility
- the cost or availability of healthy food
- where they live, including places they can play and be active
- food advertisements
- not getting enough sleep

If you are concerned about your child's weight

As children grow, it's important to measure their health and development. Your GP or public health nurse (PHN) may bring up the topic of growth and weight with you.

It can be hard to talk about weight. You may feel nervous talking to a healthcare professional.

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Diagnosing overweight and obesity in children

Your GP or PHN will measure your child's weight, height and growth. They might also ask you some other questions about your child's appetite, activity, and how their weight affects their health.

They may use a child growth chart to look at your child's weight compared to their height and age.

They may also work out your child's body mass index (BMI) and see how this compares to other children of their age.

If their BMI is lower than average, your child might be underweight.

If their BMI is above average, your child might have excess weight. This is also called overweight.

When excess weight begins to affect their health, this is called obesity.

Overweight and obesity are chronic conditions with many causes. They are not just caused by a lack of exercise and too much food.

Your GP or PHN will give you advice to help your child grow in a healthy way. They may also refer your child to a dietitian, paediatrician or weight management service.

Going to a dietitian

Your GP may refer your child to a dietitian to talk about their appetite or nutrition. The dietitian can work with you to build food and drink habits to support your child's development.

Going to a paediatrician

A paediatrician is a doctor who specialises in child health. If your child's excess weight is affecting their health, your GP may refer your child to see a paediatrician for tests.

Going to a weight management service

There may be a weight management service in your area. Talk to your GP about getting a referral to these services.

Weight management services usually include:

- dietitians
- physiotherapists
- psychologists
- other specialists

They give families advice and support to manage growth, weight and health.

[Lifestyle changes for your child's weight](#)

Risks of overweight and obesity in children

If your child has excess weight, they may have problems with:

- teasing and bullying
- pain and movement

- fitness
- breathing
- blood sugar levels

They may be more likely to have obesity as an adult.

Learn about [adult obesity](#).

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