

### How to Prevent Childhood Obesity

**While most people are probably aware that childhood obesity is an issue, many people don't realize just how big of a problem it's become. According to statistics released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC),**[**19.3% of children and adolescents between the ages of 2 and 19 are obese**](https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/childhood.html)**. That's about 14.4 million kids total, or 1 in 5 individuals.**

**Part of the reason this data is so sobering is that the consequences of obesity aren't just limited to childhood. In addition to the danger that obesity will follow a child into adulthood, experts warn that childhood obesity can cause chronic medical issues such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease, liver disease, reproductive problems, and even some cancers—all of which have the potential to haunt children in the long term.**

**For parents, guardians, or children who are grappling with this problem, preventing childhood obesity may seem discouraging, or even downright mystifying. More and more, our supermarkets seem flooded with unhealthy foods, and our work and recreation time seems to revolve around sitting in front of screens—**[**both of which have been linked to the rise in obesity**](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000383.htm)**over the last several decades.**

**Of course, there are other factors at play in this issue too. As with adults, genetic factors and underlying medical issues can play a role in childhood obesity. Due to the increasing busyness of modern life, many parents don't have the time to prepare healthy meals at home, and most of the quick options available (such as fast food or frozen meals) are high in calories and low in nutrition. Outside of the household, community factors can also contribute to childhood obesity as well.**

**While preventing childhood obesity may feel difficult, the good news is that it's certainly possible. Below are a few ideas for ways to**[**combat childhood obesity**](https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/obesity/preventing-obesity)**in your life, household, and community:**

* **Diet. Poor eating habits are one of the biggest causes of childhood obesity. Try to stock the house with more whole grains, vegetables, and fruits, and fewer processed sugary foods. Get creative with the ways you present nutritious foods (ants on a log, anyone?). When you do indulge in sweets, try for smaller portion sizes, and look for ways you can cut back on sugar or substitute healthier alternatives (such as frozen yogurt instead of ice cream).**
* **Lifestyle. Physical exercise is one of the best weapons against obesity. Encourage your kids to spend more time moving, whether that's by making a ritual out of nightly family walks or gauging their interest in a new activity. If screen time is difficult to cut back on, devise a workout game for their favorite show (e.g., every time a certain character does something, everyone does 10 jumping jacks). Inadequate sleep has also been linked to obesity, so teach your kids about the importance of good sleep practices.**
* **Community. A child's surroundings can have a big impact on their weight. If you're able to, advocate for healthy lunches and enriching physical education programs at your child's school. Similarly, safe neighborhoods are more conducive to physical activity. Consider supporting policies that are designed to make neighborhoods safe, or making use of your local community center. Or, if you have the means, travel outside your neighborhood to visit a nearby park or nature preserve with your kids.**

**At PHIT America Foundation, we believe that**[**physical education teachers have the most important job in America**](https://phitamerica.org/benefits/most-important-job-in-america/)**and that**[**PE is a necessity in schools**](https://phitamerica.org/news-blogs/blog/why-kids-need-physical-education-in-school/)**in order to build a healthier future for our children, including preventing childhood obesity. We aim to improve the physical and mental health of children all across the United States by providing kids with increased physical activity programs, like our**[**AMPED programs**](https://phitamerica.org/key-programs/amped/)**; getting physical education back in schools; and helping children afford to play organized sports.**[**Sign our petition for healthy kids**](https://phitamerica.org/key-programs/petition-require-physical-activity-30-minutes-3-times-a-week/)**, or visit our website to find out**[**how you can get involved**](https://phitamerica.org/)**and bring an AMPED program to a school near you!**