



## Healthy Weight

# How Can You Help?

Healthy eating and physical activity can promote a healthy weight through a balance of energy expenditure and caloric consumption. When there is an imbalance, youth are at risk for obesity.<sup>1</sup> Obesity is the condition of having a high amount of excess body fat.<sup>2</sup> Among children and adolescents, obesity can lead to other health and social problems, such as high cholesterol, Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, sleep issues, bone and joint issues, being bullied and stigmatized because of their weight, and poor self-esteem.<sup>3,4</sup> Schools can address and prevent obesity by teaching students how to maintain a healthy weight and by giving students opportunities to eat healthy and be physically active.<sup>1</sup>

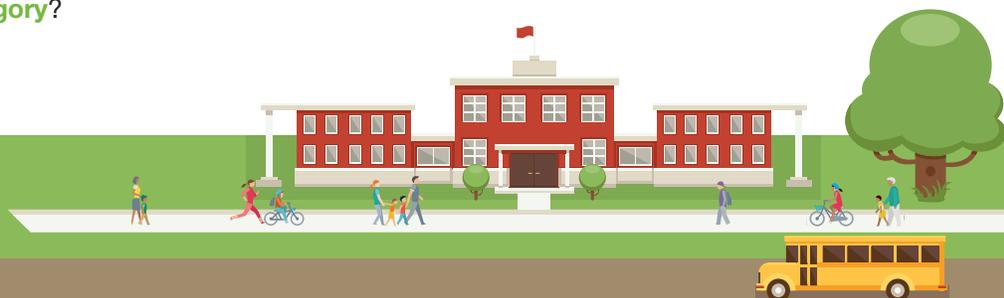
### What's Happening at School?

Knowing the answers to the following questions can help you support your child's school to address obesity. If you don't know the answers to these questions, check out the school handbook or school website, attend a school wellness meeting or Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meeting, or simply ask your child's teacher.

1. Does the school teach about healthy eating, physical activity, inactivity (such as television watching), maintaining a healthy weight, and preventing chronic diseases, such as Type 2 diabetes, through health education or some other way?
2. Does the school have a universal bullying prevention policy that discourages students from bullying other students about their weight or body size?
3. If the school measures students' heights and weights, and calculates Body Mass Index (BMI), is it done in private, and are results kept confidential? Does the school follow **body mass index measurement safeguards** recommended by CDC?
4. Does the school offer health information about weight and contact information for medical care providers in the community if a student's weight falls outside of the **healthy weight category**?
5. Is your school following the school district's wellness policy on nutrition education, nutrition promotion, nutrition standards, and physical activity?
6. Does the school or district have policies about the types of foods and beverages that are available during the school day or that are marketed at school?
7. Does the school offer plenty of opportunities for students to be physically active through daily physical education, recess, physical activity breaks, and before and after-school physical activity?



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion



## Ideas for Parents

You can be involved in your child's school by **attending** meetings, workshops, or training events offered by the school; **communicating** with school staff and other parents; **volunteering** for school events or in your child's classroom; **reinforcing** healthy messages and practices your child learns at school; **helping** make decisions about health in the school; and **being part** of community activities supported by the school. Here are some specific ideas for how you can support your child's school in addressing obesity.

- Advocate for a full-time registered nurse in school.
- Know your **child's body mass index** to determine his or her weight status, and discuss the results with your child's medical care provider or school nurse.
- Encourage your child to participate in school sports or other physical activities to help them be active for 60 minutes or more every day.<sup>5</sup>
- Encourage your child to eat school meals. The school breakfast and lunch program will help your child eat a healthy diet based on the **Dietary Guidelines for Americans**.<sup>6</sup>
- Work with your child's school to identify healthy, appealing beverage options for vending machines to replace sugar-sweetened beverages, such as soda, sports drinks, and energy drinks.<sup>7</sup> Check out the **USDA's Smart Snack Guidance** for ideas and assistance.
- Ask your child's school to close the school campus during lunch to limit your child's access to fast food and restaurants during the school day.<sup>7</sup>
- Read the **local school wellness policy** for your school district, and participate in the development of the policy.
- Participate in the school health team at your child's school.
- Volunteer to map safe walking and biking routes to the school. If you live one mile or less from school, lead a **walking school bus** with children in your community.
- Eat meals as a family, whenever possible.<sup>7</sup>
- Reduce sedentary screen time, such as television, video games, and computer usage.<sup>7</sup>
- Schedule and keep routine visits with your child's medical care provider.
- Be physically active as a family.
- Do not put your child on a diet without first consulting your child's medical care provider.



Check out additional resources for parents related to the school nutrition environment and services, physical education and physical activity, and managing chronic health conditions at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/P4HS.htm>.

## REFERENCES

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