

Prevention and Identification of Childhood Overweight and Obesity

The following guideline recommends specific interventions for prevention and identification of childhood overweight and obesity.

Eligible Population	Key Components	Recommendation and Level of Evidence
All children and their parents	Education, parental modeling of healthy behaviors, and prevention of risk	<p>At each periodic health exam</p> <p>General advice for all ages: Promote a healthy diet and lifestyle with focus on 5-2-1-0: 5 or more fruits and vegetables, 2 hours or less recreational screen time, 1 hour or more physical activity, 0 sugary drinks daily Educate parents about importance of parental role modeling for a healthy lifestyle (diet and exercise) and parental controls. Limit eating out; avoid fast food. Avoid food as a reward.</p> <p>Infant/Toddler (age 0-2): Encourage breastfeeding for at least 12 months; discourage overfeeding of bottle fed infants [A]. Avoid bottle feeding as a sleep aid. Avoid premature introduction of solids and base timing for introduction of solids on child's development, usually between 4 and 6 months of age. Preserve natural satiety by respecting a child's appetite. Avoid high-calorie, nutrient-poor beverages (e.g., soda, fruit punch, sports drinks, or any juice drink less than 100% juice). Discourage any juice prior to 6 months. If using juice after 6 months, limit to 4-6 oz./day in a cup. No television or other screen time under age 2 [D].</p> <p>Preschool (ages 3-5): Limit television and other screen time to at most 1-2 hours per day. No access to television and other screens in primary sleeping area. Replace whole milk with skim or 2%; avoid high-calorie, nutrient-poor beverages (soda, fruit punch, sports drinks, juice drinks); limit intake of 100% juice to < 6 ounces per day. Respect the child's appetite and allow him or her to self-regulate food intake. Provide structure and boundaries around healthy eating with adult supervision. Promote physical activity including unstructured play at home, during child care and in the community. Promote age-appropriate sleep durations (11-13 hours/night)</p> <p>School-aged (ages 5-12), the above plus: Accumulate at least 60 minutes, and up to several hours, of age-appropriate physical activity on all or most days of the week (emphasize lifestyle exercise, i.e., outdoor play, yard work, and household chores). Consider barriers (e.g., social support, unsafe neighborhoods or lack of school-based physical education) and explore individualized solutions. Reinforce making healthy food and physical activity choices at home and outside of parental influence. Promote age-appropriate sleep durations (10-11 hours/night)</p>
	Assessment of body mass index, risk factors for overweight and excessive weight gain relative to linear growth	<p>General assessment: History (including focused family history) and physical exam Beginning at age 6¹, measure and record weight and height on CDC BMI-for-age growth chart, calculate and plot patients' BMI percentile [weight (kg)/height squared (m²) or (pounds x 703)/inches²]² Dietary patterns (e.g. frequency of eating outside the home, consumption of breakfast, adequate fruits and vegetables, excessive portion sizes, consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages, etc.) Physical activity level Risk factors for overweight³ including pattern of weight change [C]. Watch for increases of 3-4 BMI units/year. Sleep patterns</p>

¹AAP recommends screening at age 2; USPSTF age 6+; NCQA HEDIS age 3+

²[CDC growth charts](#)

³Low or high birth weight, low income, minority, television or computer screen time > 2 hrs, low physical activity, poor eating, depression

Levels of evidence for the most significant recommendations: A = randomized controlled trials; B = controlled trials, no randomization; C = observational studies; D = opinion of expert panel

This guideline lists core management steps. It is based on Screening for Obesity in Children and Adolescents: US Preventive Services TAsk Force Recommendation Statement, Pediatrics 2010; 125:351-367; and the Institute for Clinical Systems Improvement. Prevention and Management of Obesity for Children and Adolescents. Published July 2013; and the American Medical Association 2007 Expert Committee Recommendations on the Treatment of Pediatric Obesity. Individual patient considerations and advances in medical science may supersede or modify these recommendations.