
INTRODUCTION

If you are unsure how to help your overweight child, becoming well informed is a good place to start. As a parent or caregiver, having the right information can help a child reach and maintain a healthy weight.

When children gain too much weight, this can increase their risk for:

- diabetes and other diseases, such as cancer, heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and triglycerides (fats in the blood), and stroke;
- breathing problems like sleep apnea or asthma;
- being obese as adults; and
- developing bone and joint problems.

In addition to these health problems, being overweight can cause emotional pain too. Children who are overweight may be discriminated against, or they may feel isolated.

It's clear there are many risks for children who are overweight. However, it's important to know that the ways that adults lose weight are usually not right for children. Children are growing and developing. Therefore, they have special nutritional needs. A diet that is too limited may keep children from growing and developing as they should.

This booklet is written for parents with overweight children between the ages of 4 and 12 years. It explains what you need to know about your child's nutritional and growth needs, and it shows ways to improve the eating habits of your entire family. By changing the way your whole family eats, it will be easier for your overweight child to maintain healthy eating habits.