



Childhood obesity

Get the healthy future they deserve

Many parents are unaware of the serious health implications of children being overweight (or obese) with a greater risk of long-term health problems, including cardiovascular problems and type 2 diabetes. Overweight babies and toddlers are more than five times as likely to be overweight as children and adults. Good eating and exercise habits need to be developed early in life. Talk to your health visitor about healthy meal ideas for all the family.

Being overweight is often simply due to an unhealthy diet and not enough exercise. It is better to prevent your child from becoming overweight in the first place. Good sleep patterns, a healthy varied diet and regular exercise will all help keep your child to a healthy weight. Occasionally a child will put on excessive weight for no reason, if so talk to your health visitor as there could be an underlying health problem.

The emotional consequences of obesity in childhood can be severe and long-lasting, including bullying and low self-esteem. Parents can find it difficult to talk to their child about being overweight as they feel guilty and they do not want to upset them by talking about it.

Parents often underestimate the amount of food that children eat and overestimate the amount of activity they do. Many parents believe their children are already active enough confusing 'being boisterous' with 'being active'.

1.

My mum confuses giving her grandson chocolate with being kind to him. She only wants him to be happy but I am worried.

2.

It can be difficult, but try to explain to her why you would prefer him to have healthy snacks and that in the long run it is best for him.

3.

Give her some healthy meal ideas and maybe send him along with some fruit or vegetable slices to snack on.

Be in control

It can be easy for busy parents (or family members) to prioritise their children's immediate happiness over their long-term health, by giving them the chocolate bar or sugary drink they are crying for. Many parents allow children to decide what goes into the supermarket trolley in order to avoid rows. You are responsible for what your child eats.

What your child eats now will set up a pattern for life and overweight children are being set up for a lifetime of sickness and health problems.