



# Information for Patients & Caregivers

## What You Need to Know About Obesity in Children

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ABOUT 20% OF CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS IN QATAR ARE EITHER OBESE OR OVERWEIGHT

## WHAT IS OBESITY?

Obesity is a health problem caused by excessive body fat. This can have a serious effect on your child's health.

Excessive fat accumulates around and within the main organs of the body and under the skin. This has an effect on the body's ability to process sugars and can lead to diabetes – even in children.

Obesity can also lead to many long term health problems including heart disease, strokes, and even some forms of cancer. Children who are obese can also suffer from depression, anxiety, and bullying.

It is therefore very important to prevent your child from becoming obese.

Children are defined as obese if their weight is well above average for their age.

Growth Charts are used to determine the appropriate weight and height for your child and the doctor will tell you if your child is overweight or obese.

OBESITY AND OVERWEIGHT ARE BOTH UNHEALTHY CONDITIONS CAUSED BY CONSUMING MORE CALORIES THAN THE BODY NEEDS

## RISK FACTORS FOR OBESITY

Risk factors that affect your child's chances of developing obesity include:

- Unhealthy Family Lifestyles.
- Intake of High Energy Foods or Drinks.
- Low Levels of Physical Activity.
- Too Much Time Spent in Front of Screens.
- Poor Sleeping Habits.
- Psychological Stress and depression.

Other Risk Factors include:

- Female Gender.
- Genetics and Ethnicity.
- Family History of being Overweight or Obese.
- Other Health Problems such as physical or learning disabilities.
- Childhood Psychological Trauma.



## RECOMMENDED SLEEP DURATION BY AGE (IN HOURS EACH NIGHT):

Age 0 – 2 years: 11 – 16 hrs  
 Age 3 – 5 years: 10 – 13 hrs  
 Age 6 – 12 years: 9 – 12 hrs  
 Age 13 -18 years: 8 – 10 hrs

## WHAT YOUR DOCTOR WILL DO

If your child is found to be overweight or obese – or if you are worried about your child's weight, it is a good idea to see your Primary Care doctor for advice.

Your doctor will ask questions about your child's health and lifestyle (diets, eating habits, sleep, and physical activities both in school and at home).

The doctor will also check for any growth abnormalities, changes in pubertal development and measure your child's blood pressure.

Your doctor may also order some routine tests to check for any underlying health problems.

## LIFESTYLE ADVICE

Your doctor will likely suggest the following lifestyle changes:

- Follow a healthy diet
- Increasing physical activities at home and in school.
- Restricting screen time (e.g. television, video games, mobile phone use.
- Maintain a healthy sleeping schedule.

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Encourage at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity is required per day for school age children.

Overweight or Obese children may need more than 60 min of activity per day.

## HEALTHY EATING

Reduce intake of 'high energy-dense' foods, including:

- Animal fats.
- Sweets.
- Cakes.
- Sugary drinks.
- 'Fast foods'.

Select 'low energy-dense' foods:

- Wholegrains.
- Cereals low in sugar.
- Fruits.
- Vegetables – particularly greens.

Control your child's portion size and eat regularly.

Breastfeeding is the best option for infants with obesity. Complementary foods should be delayed until 6 months of age.

## ADVICE TO PARENTS:

- Home-made meals.
- Give preference to grilled or boiled foods rather than fried foods.
- Offer healthy food choices for your child in school.
- Remove unhealthy foods from home.
- Model the eating behaviour you want your child to have, including:
  - Good meal hygiene.
  - No TV or phones while eating.
- Remove screens from bedrooms and during meals.
- Be involved in promoting physical activity in the family.

## HOW MUCH FOOD SHOULD MY CHILD BE CONSUMING?

Use the Chart below to determine how much of each food group your child should eat on a daily basis:

Age	2-3 years	4-8 years	9-13 years	14-18 years
<b>Vegetables</b>	1 cup	1.5 cups	2 - 2.5cups	2.5 - 3 cups
<b>Fruit</b>	1 cup	1 - 1.5 cups	1.5 cups	1.5 - 2 cups
<b>Grains</b>	85 grams	140 grams	140-170 grams	170-225 grams
<b>Protein</b>	55 grams	115 grams	140 grams	150-185 grams
<b>Dairy</b>	2 cups	2.5 cups	3 cups	3 cups

### 1 Cup of Vegetables counts as:

1 cup fresh (raw or cooked), frozen, or canned or 2 cups of leafy greens, like fresh spinach, romaine lettuce, or kale.

### 1 Cup of Fruit counts as:

1 cup of fresh, frozen, canned fruit, 1 cup of 100% juice, or half a cup dried fruit.

### 20 Grams of Grains counts as:

1 piece of bread, 1/4 a cup of cooked rice or pasta, 1 cup of dry cereal, or 1/2 a cup of cooked cereal. Try to use whole grain cereals.

### 20 Grams of Protein counts as:

20 grams of cooked beef, poultry, or fish, 1 egg, 1 tablespoon of peanut butter, 10 grams of nuts, or a quarter cup of cooked beans.

### 1 Cup of Dairy counts:

1 cup (or 240 grams) of milk, soy milk, yogurt, 30 grams of hard cheese, or a 1/2 of a cup of shredded cheese. Dairy products should be 'low fat' after the age of 2 years.

## TREATMENTS

If your child is not losing weight with healthy eating and physical exercise, your doctor may suggest a referral to a dietitian or a Paediatric Specialist.

The Dietitian will advise on further improving your child's diet. The Paediatric Specialist will consider whether there is an underlying cause for the obesity and what other treatments like medication could help.

Before prescribing any medication, your doctor will discuss the potential benefits and side effects of this treatment with you and your child.

Other possible treatment options are *bariatric surgery* and *endoscopic procedures*. However, these options are reserved for patients with Extreme Obesity and those with medical problems. **They are NOT for everyone.**

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) Qatar has published a National Clinical Guideline on the Diagnosis & Management of Obesity in Children and Adolescents.

The guideline is available to the public from the MoPH website: [www.moph.gov.qa](http://www.moph.gov.qa)

### SCREEN-TIME:

Watching TV or using other kinds of screens (tablets, mobile phones etc) is not recommended for children less than 18 months of age.

For older children, screen time should be limited to less than 2 hours per day.