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# Parenting

the

# Preschooler

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## Overweight Children Risk Developing Type 2 Diabetes

Being overweight can harm more than one's self-esteem; it has serious health consequences such as increased risk of type 2 diabetes, heart disease and osteoarthritis.

Did you know that one of eight American children between six and seventeen years of age are overweight? This is up from one in twenty in 1980. At the same time there is growing concern about the recent sharp increase in reported cases of type 2 diabetes in children and adolescents. Children who are overweight often have pre-diabetes and insulin resistance, conditions that may lead to type 2 diabetes. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that this form of diabetes is so prevalent among youngsters that it is no longer referred to as adult-onset diabetes.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, research shows that in 1990 less than 4 percent of children newly diagnosed with diabetes were type 2. Now 30 to 50 percent of children newly diagnosed with diabetes have type 2 diabetes.

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### 1 IN 3 AMERICANS BORN IN 2000 WILL DEVELOP DIABETES

*The estimated lifetime risk of developing diabetes for persons born in 2000 was 30% for males and 39% for females, based on data from the National Health Interview Survey, U.S. Census Bureau and other sources.*

**Type 2 diabetes**, formerly called adult-onset diabetes or noninsulin-dependent diabetes, is the most common form of diabetes. People can develop type 2 diabetes at any age--even during childhood. This form of diabetes usually begins with insulin resistance, a condition in which fat, muscle, and liver cells do not use insulin efficiently. At first, the pancreas keeps up with the added demand by producing more insulin. In time, however, it loses the ability to secrete enough insulin in response to meals which leads to high blood sugars. Being overweight and inactive increases the chances of developing type 2 diabetes. Treatment includes using diabetes medicines, making wise food choices, exercising regularly, taking aspirin daily, and controlling blood pressure and cholesterol.

### What Puts Preschoolers at Risk for Type 2 Diabetes as an Adolescent?

- The most common risk factor is being overweight.
- Inactivity, along with being overweight increase ones risk
- Children of color ( Native American, African American, Hispanic, Pacific Islander and Asian) are at increased risk.
- A family history of diabetes increases risk. Many (45% to 80%) people with diabetes have at least one parent with diabetes. Diabetes may span many generations of family members.



**If you are concerned that your preschooler has the potential to be at risk:**

1. Present food as fuel for your child’s body, not a reward for good behavior.
2. Keep serving sizes reasonable.
3. Encourage your child to be physically active. Exercise is essential to weight loss and prevention of type 2 diabetes. Physical activity speeds up calorie expenditure, promotes weight loss, and increases insulin sensitivity at the cellular level.
4. Limit television viewing time. Every two hours per day of watching television increases the risk of obesity by 23% and the risk of diabetes by 14%.
5. Trade regular sodas and other sweet drinks for water or low-fat milk.
6. Make healthy eating habits and increased physical activity a family goal – lead by example.
7. Be responsible for what and when your child eats and drinks, your child decides how much and whether to eat.
8. Find out if your family history includes type 2 diabetes.
9. Talk to a health care professional about a blood glucose test and nutrition advice for your child.

**Diabetes Cannot Be Cured, But It Can Be Managed**

Diabetes is managed with physical activity, a daily pattern of meals and snacks, weight loss if the person is overweight, and medication if necessary. Follow the three major messages identified in USDA’s Dietary Guidelines for Americans:

■ **Aim for fitness.**

Having daily family physical activities creates a lifestyle where children are centered around physical instead of sedentary activities. It may be organized activities with other families or family outings such as hiking, biking or even dancing on a regular basis. As parents we need to set a good example for children. Eat healthy meals and enjoy regular physical activities together. Children need at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily while adults need at least 30 minutes or more every day.

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■ **Use the Food Guide Pyramid.**

Use the Food Guide Pyramid for Young Children to help make healthy choices you can enjoy. Build your family’s eating pattern on a variety of grains, fruits, and vegetables. Choose whole grains such as whole wheat bread, brown rice, and oats. Enjoy five fruits and vegetables daily. Make it a game to chart out how many fruits and vegetables are eaten daily for a few weeks. After age two, choose fat-free or low-fat types of milk products and lean meats and poultry. Limit your use of solid fats, such as butter or hard margarines. Use vegetable oils as a substitute. Take action for good health by making healthy food choices available for your preschooler. Some good choices might be graham crackers or cut up fruits and vegetables.

■ **Choose sensibly, opting for foods low in saturated fat, cholesterol, added sugar and salt.**

The eating patterns you set with your preschooler have long term impacts for your child. Being overweight has serious health consequences. To find out more about type 2 diabetes in children go to the websites listed under sources at the end of this article.

**Sources:**  
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