



Childhood Obesity

About Childhood Obesity

- Childhood obesity is a chronic condition in which there is an accumulation of body fat that negatively affects a child's overall quality of life, well-being, and health across all environments, such as their community, home, and school
- Further defined as an individual with a body mass index at or above the 95th percentile for children of the same age and gender

Who's at risk of becoming overweight or obese?

- Children with developmental disabilities are 40% more likely to develop obesity due to secondary conditions (pain, social isolation, de-conditioning) and/or predisposing factors (genetic syndromes such as Prader-Willie, medications that increase weight gain).
- Children with problem eating behaviors such as food selectivity
- Children who are physically inactive
- Children with sensory processing differences and oral motor impairments
- Children that have limited access to accessible playgrounds and parks, trained staff to adapt programs for inclusion, and equipment and assistive devices that allow for participation

How does obesity impact social and emotional health?

- Children who are overweight are at risk of weight bias (or weight stigma), which refers to negative judgements of an obese person based on social attitudes or stereotypes (e.g., lazy, poor self-control)
- Weight bias from adults and peers may result in negative remarks about appearance, verbal teasing, name calling, social exclusion, and physical bullying leading to poor self-esteem and body image
- Feelings of loneliness and isolation

What's OT's Role:

Enhance a child's abilities by adapting and organizing their daily occupations or activities related to health management, such as physical activity and nutrition management into daily routines to promote a healthy lifestyle. Acknowledge the importance of routines, roles, rituals, and habits that promote the adoption and maintenance of healthy behaviors. Matching the child's skills to the demands of the activity by minimizing barriers and using environmental supports. Also, facilitate participation in meaningful occupations, such as play and leisure, by matching a child's strength to activities and by modifying and adapting activities to match personal abilities. Lastly, finding meaningful physical activities to provide a sense of meaning and purpose.

Physical Activity Suggestions

- Taking your child to your local playground and explore the different playground equipment such as monkey bars, swings, climbing stairs, going down slides, and climbing wall
- Obstacle course activities
- Wheelbarrow Walks, Bear Walks, Wall Pushups, and Crab Walk exercises
- Introducing your child to swimming and bike riding
- Throwing and catching ball
- Balloon Toss
- Yoga
- Dancing along to music
- Climbing up and down stairs at home
- UE stretching exercises such as arm circles, touching toes, butterfly stretch, raising one leg up with hand (Quadriceps stretch), and overhead arm stretch

Feel Free to contact our OT's with any questions you may have

