

## MAIN FACTORS OF OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY IN CHILDREN

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Overweight and obesity today are one of the urgent problems of the health status of the population of modern society. Over the past few decades, there has been a trend towards a rapid increase in the number of obese children and adolescents worldwide.

Overweight and obese children are more likely to experience reduced quality of life and education, behavioral and emotional disturbances, and stigma, leading to mental health problems.

The causes of obesity are varied and include both genetic predisposition and environmental factors. External risk factors for obesity in children include:

- maternal smoking during pregnancy;
- large fetal weight at birth (more than 4 kg);
- low fetal weight at birth, combined with rapid weight gain for the first time at 2 years of age (especially for the first time at 3-6 months);
- artificial feeding of newborns;
- consumption of sugary drinks in childhood;
- sedentary lifestyle and inactivity;
- insufficient sleep (less than 12 hours in the first year of life).

Obesity leads to morbidity, disability and worsens the quality of life. Obese children are at risk of developing many diseases. Childhood obesity is largely a risk factor for cardiovascular, digestive, musculoskeletal, endocrine, and psychiatric disorders. It is also associated with poor school performance and low self-esteem. According to some studies, obese children are 4-6 times more likely to suffer from obstructive sleep apnea.

Anthropometric indicators are used to control weight in children. A person's height and weight are most important for assessing and monitoring nutritional status, diagnosing overweight and obesity in adults and children. Body mass index (BMI) is considered a

necessary indicator for assessing the condition of children from preschool age. It is calculated as weight (kg) divided by height squared (m<sup>2</sup>) and is used to define underweight, overweight and obesity. The calculated indicator is compared with the international standard median depending on gender and age.

One of the leading directions in the prevention of obesity in childhood is the promotion of healthy nutrition among the population. It is necessary to stop the consumption of high-calorie and low-nutrient foods. These include sugary carbonated drinks, most fast food, floury, fatty. Attention should be paid to eating on a schedule, introducing regular meals, especially breakfasts, and avoiding constant snacking throughout the day. Another easy way to control calories is to reduce portion sizes, everyone knows that portion size and obesity progress in parallel.

It is recommended to increase your intake of fruits and vegetables, as well as legumes, whole grains and nuts, limit energy intake from all types of fats and switch from saturated to unsaturated fats, limit free sugars. For effective prevention of overweight and obesity, daily physical activity for at least one hour is recommended.

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