

What is Intensive Behavior and Lifestyle Treatment (IHBLT)?

Intensive health behavior and lifestyle treatment (IHBLT) is a safe and proven approach for adolescents with overweight and obesity.

IHBLT recognizes that each child has unique needs. It aims to address those needs for the child as well as their family in a holistic way. IHBLT also provides supports to navigate common barriers to healthy active living in a way that respects a family's cultural heritage and values.

Other names for IHBLT include intensive behavioral intervention or family healthy weight programs.

What is the goal of IHBLT?

While IHBLT works toward lowering medical risks, the primary goals are good health, a good quality of life, good self-esteem and respect for bodies of all shapes.

What to expect during IHBLT treatment program?

It can be hard to lead healthy lifestyles in today's world, but studies show that IHBLT programs work. They go beyond handouts with health tips. The programs engage with your family to provide face-to-face opportunities to practice healthy behaviors. And IHBLT programs continue to help you change behavior in ways that are individualized for your family. Programs may include different specialists, like community health educators, dietitians and exercise specialists. They can take place within health care settings or community-based organizations.

Many IHBLT programs involve:

- Non-judgmental and inclusive activities that boost your child or teen's self-esteem and that focus on health, not weight.
- Activities that focus on physical activity and healthy nutrition. Each program has a unique way to achieve this. Some may provide in-person exercise classes or host cooking demonstrations.
- Attention to the whole household to help your child thrive in a healthy environment. A focus on changes that families can enjoy and keep up after the program has ended.
- Plenty of time! Changing routines and habits can't happen overnight, and IHBLT programs work best when they offer plenty of time—26 hours or more, over 3 to 12 months—to help families succeed.

Do IHBLT programs work for kids of different ages?

Yes, several decades' worth of studies show these programs work well in many age groups. Children who participate in IHBLT for at least 3 months can expect to see improvements in health, fitness, nutrition habits and quality of life. The longer children participate and the more often they attend, the better health they can expect to see. We have the most information for children older than 6, but new studies in children 2-5 years old look promising.

How do we get started in an IHBLT program

Talk with your pediatrician to find options that work for your child and your family. Your doctor may know of a comprehensive program near you. If there are none nearby, you and your doctor can work together to address different lifestyle and behavior topics. This can be done in step-by-step at the office. Your doctor may also find other specialists nearby who can provide coordinated care.

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics Institute for Healthy Childhood Weight.

This resource was developed with a [healthychildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org) article written by Dr Sarah Barlow, MD, FAAP and Sarah Armstrong, MD, FAAP. The article is based on the 2023 American Academy of Pediatrics Clinical Practice Guideline on Evaluation and Treatment of Children and Adolescents with Overweight & Obesity. For the latest information, please visit www.healthychildren.org.

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