

# Overweight Toddler - Preventing Over-Feeding and Over-Eating

## Definition

- Currently 10% of 2 to 5 year old children in the U.S. are overweight.
- The main cause is over-eating.
- Overeating means eating more calories daily than are needed for normal growth and activity.
- Overeating is mainly a bad habit. It's learned during the early years of life.
- It starts with over-feeding.

## Health Information

### Healthy Eating Goal

- We want children to eat only when they are hungry.
- They should stop when they are full.
- It is far easier to teach healthy eating habits early.
- It becomes harder when a child starts to show signs of becoming overweight.
- The following are some tips for preventing excessive weight gain in young children.

## Care Advice

### Feeding Tips for Babies: Prevention of Over-Feeding

1. **Try to Breast-feed:**
  - Breast-feeding allows babies to control the amount of milk they drink.
  - They stop when they are full.
  - Overfeeding by breast is unusual.
2. **Avoid Grazing:**
  - Grazing is eating frequently for reasons other than hunger. It means feeding while the stomach is still full.
  - It takes 2 hours for the stomach to empty.
3. **Stretch Feeding Intervals:**
  - If **breast-feeding**, gradually advance the nursing interval. Extend to 2 hours or longer by 1 month of age. Go to 3 hours by 2 months of age.
  - If **bottle-feeding**, try to feed your infant every 2 hours or longer at birth. Go to 3 hours or longer by 2 6 months of age.
  - Change to 3 meals a day plus 2 small snacks by 6 months of age.
4. **Feed Slowly:**
  - Feed your baby slowly, rather than rapidly.
  - Don't try to hurry your baby's pace of eating.
  - It takes 15 to 20 minutes of eating for most babies to feel full.
5. **Don't Make Your Baby Finish Every Bottle:**
  - After she signals she is full, don't encourage her to drink more.
  - Signals to watch for are turning her head or not opening her mouth.

6. **Avoid Comfort Feedings:**
  - Don't feed your baby every time he cries.
  - Most crying babies want to be held and cuddled.
  - Teach your infant to use human contact (rather than food) to relieve discomfort.
  - Also, don't assume a sucking baby is hungry. Your baby may just want a pacifier or help with finding her thumb.
7. **Delay Solid Foods Until 4 to 6 Months:**
  - Avoid giving solid food to your baby until he is at least 4 months old. (6 months for breastfed babies).
  - Your child doesn't need to finish the whole jar of baby food.
8. **Discontinue Breast and Bottle Feeding by 12 Months of Age:**
  - A study found that delayed weaning was associated with more obesity.
  - The main reason is its association with comfort feedings.

### **Feeding Tips for Toddlers: Prevention of Over-Eating**

1. **Teach to Eat Only for Hunger:**
  - Help your child recognize hunger and only to eat when he's hungry.
  - Teach him not to eat when he's bored, lonely, stressed, watching videos, etc.
  - Don't deny your child food, however, if she is hungry. But, make snacks small and nutritious. Parents have control over what they serve.
2. **Avoid Grazing:**
  - Grazing is eating at frequent intervals instead of waiting until he is hungry.
  - Children who rarely experience normal hunger become very upset when they have to wait.
3. **Teach to Stop Eating When Full:**
  - Try to teach your child to stop eating when she feels full.
  - Teach this from the beginning.
  - Overfeeding teaches a child to overeat when he is older.
  - Don't insist that your child clean his plate.
4. **Avoid Tote Bottles:**
  - Don't allow your child to keep a bottle or sippy cup with her all the time.
  - Children who are allowed to carry a bottle around with them learn to use food for comforting.
  - It also damages the teeth.
5. **Don't Use Food as a Distraction or Reward:**
  - Don't give your child food as a way to keep him occupied. Instead, give him something to play with when you need some free time.
  - Avoid giving children bottles, sippy cups, or other snacks while they are in car seats or strollers.
  - Use praise and physical affection instead of food as a reward for good behavior.

## Call Your Doctor If

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- You are concerned about your child's weight
- You are not sure if your child is overweight
- You think your child needs to be seen
- You have other questions or concerns

### **Pediatric Care Advice**

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