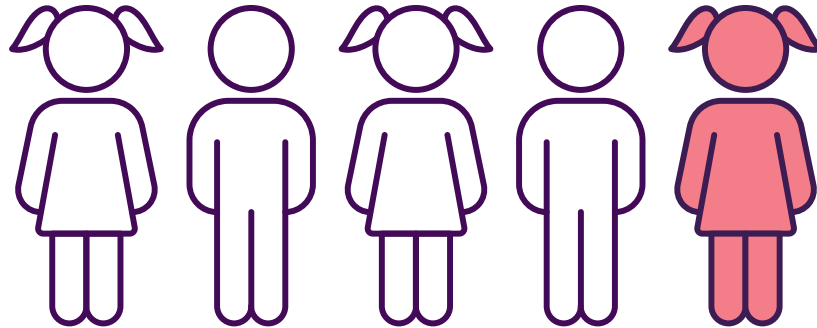


Understanding Childhood Weight: What Parents Need to Know

Helping your child grow up healthy is a journey – and weight is just one part of the bigger picture.

If you've ever worried about your child's weight, you're not alone. In fact, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about **1 in 5 children and teens in the U.S. are affected by obesity** (around 21%) – and those numbers have been rising. Children who are overweight are also more likely to develop obesity over time if healthy changes aren't made early.



The good news? **There are simple, supportive steps families can take – and your UPMC CCP care team and registered dietitians are here to support you.**

Clearing Up the Common Myth

Childhood weight is **not about laziness or lack of willpower.**

Weight is influenced by many factors, including:



Every child is different – and some may be more likely to gain weight than others.

Every Child Is Unique

Children grow at different rates and come in different shapes and sizes. There is **no single “perfect” body type.** What matters most is supporting your child's overall health, confidence, and well-being.

What Affects a Child's Weight?

Several everyday factors play a role:

- **How much they eat:** Learning to recognize hunger and fullness cues
- **What they eat:** A mix of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and proteins supports healthy growth
- **How much they move:** Regular activity helps the body use energy and build strength

Small, consistent habits make the biggest difference over time.

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What Is BMI—and Why Does It Matter?

Your child's doctor may talk about BMI (Body Mass Index).

- BMI compares your child's height and weight to other kids of the same age and sex
- It helps identify if a child may be at risk for health concerns
- It's **just one tool**, not the full picture

Your pediatrician will also consider growth patterns, activity, and eating habits when evaluating your child's health.

What Can Parents Do?

Focus on **healthy habits, not just weight**.

- Offer balanced meals and snacks
- Encourage daily movement (make it fun!)
- Create consistent routines around eating and activity
- Keep conversations positive and supportive

And most importantly, **talk to your UPMC CCP care team and registered dietitians**. They can help guide you with a plan that works for your child and your family.

Childhood overweight and obesity are **complex, but manageable**. With early support, healthy habits, and a positive approach, families can help children build a strong foundation for lifelong health.