



What Should Happen at the Doctor's Office?

What should I expect at my doctor's office?

If your child is over the age of 2, he or she should be screened for obesity at least once a year, usually during routine physicals or well-child visits. The results will determine whether your child is underweight, a healthy weight, overweight or obese.

How will the doctor assess my child's weight?

Your doctor will measure your child's height and weight. The height and weight measurements will be used to calculate your child's Body Mass Index, or BMI. The BMI is then plotted on a growth chart specific to your child's age and gender (BMI-for-age chart).

Your child's weight status is based upon the BMI percentile within which your child falls.

Are there harms related to obesity screening?

There are no physical side effects of obesity screening. However, being labeled as overweight or obese can cause poor self-esteem or disordered eating. It is very important that you and your doctor only speak to your child about the major causes of overweight and obesity and remain nonjudgmental and positive.

If my child is overweight, what will happen?

If your child is considered overweight or obese, the doctor may conduct a more complete assessment.

Table 1: Definitions of BMI Percentiles

IF YOUR CHILD'S BMI IS...	IT MEANS YOUR CHILD...	AND IS CONSIDERED...
< 5th Percentile	...weighs less than 95 of 100 children	Underweight
5th –84th Percentile	...weighs less than 84 of 100 children	Healthy weight
85th Percentile	...weighs more than 85 of 100 children	Overweight
>95th Percentile	...weighs more than 95 of 100 children	Obese

Source: Based on Age & Gender Specific Reference Population BMI Growth Charts from U.S. Centers of Disease Control and Prevention

This assessment may include the following:

- ❖ A complete family history, specifically looking for conditions known to be associated with overweight, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels or fatty liver;
- ❖ A complete physical exam and review of physical systems to rule out or identify physical problems that might cause excessive weight gain;
- ❖ Lab tests, such as blood cholesterol and sugar levels;
- ❖ A review of daily habits, including time spent watching television, eating habits, meals and where they are eaten and physical activity; or
- ❖ A history of psychosocial factors, such as depression or eating disorders.

What Parents Should Ask at the Doctor's Office About Children's Weight Status

- **Was my child's height and weight measured this visit?**
- **Was the Body Mass Index (BMI) calculated and plotted on a gender-specific BMI Growth Chart?**
- **What is my child's weight classification and percentile based upon the chart?**
- **Are there any weight-related concerns?**
- **What approaches for achieving a healthy weight have been successful and which do you recommend for us?**

If my child is overweight, should he/she be put on a diet?

Your doctor will recommend the best care for your child. In most cases, a diet is not appropriate. Diets can increase weight problems long term by creating unhealthy weight loss practices, unrealistic body images and damaged self-esteem.

For most overweight children, the recommended goal is not to lose weight but rather to stop or slow weight gain. As the child continues to grow, his or her height and weight eventually achieve a healthy balance.³ Many overweight children gained too much weight largely because of the unhealthy foods they were fed — so parents have to be part of the solution. Your doctor may encourage better eating habits as well as healthier levels of physical activity for the entire family. Based upon your doctor's advice, you can develop smaller goals until you reach the doctor's recommendation. For example, if your child is accustomed to five bottles of soda per day, a realistic goal might be to cut that amount by half over the course of a few weeks until the goal of 0 sodas per day is reached.

If your child is overweight and has one or more serious weight-related medical conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure or sleep apnea, your doctor may feel that weight loss is needed. In such cases, more structured weight management interventions may be recommended to help reduce his or her weight by about 1 pound per month until a healthy weight is achieved.



CHILDHOOD OBESITY *Facts for Families*

Table 2: Printable & Portable: Action Plan for Doctor's Visits

Date	Height	Weight	BMI Value	BMI %	Weight Status & Guidance

Recommendations for:

Physical Activity _____

Nutrition _____

Screen Time _____

Health Provider Evaluation	Overall Assessment	Specific Guidance	Date for Follow up
BMI Percentile	Summary of Results	Concrete actions for weight maintenance and obesity prevention	mm/dd/yy
Nutrition/dietary patterns			
Physical activity level			
Television & other screen time			

Reference

³ Flynn MAT, McNeil DA, Maloff B, et al. Reducing obesity and related chronic disease risk in children and youth: a synthesis of evidence with 'best practice' recommendations. *Obesity Reviews*. 2006;7(1):7-66.