



Focus on health to help kids lose weight

My daughter never lost her “baby fat” and is now a pre-teen with a weight problem that she is defensive about. How can I help?

It can be tricky for a parent to help their adolescent child lose weight. The defensiveness you see isn't unusual. Although the percentage of overweight children and adolescents has substantially increased since the 1980s, there is still a stigma to being overweight. That stigma, and the low self-esteem, depression, and teasing or bullying from peers that can result, makes weight problems a sensitive subject for families.

Unfortunately, the social problems associated with being overweight often thwart attention from the health complications. And those may be even more serious than we thought. A University of Cincinnati study recently reported in the journal *Circulation* measured the thickness and stiffness of the carotid arteries of 446 young people, ages 10 to 24. About a third were lean, a third were obese, and a third had Type 2 diabetes — which is often associated with being overweight and inactive. Arteries of the participants who were obese or who had diabetes were significantly thicker and stiffer — conditions that lead to heart attacks, strokes and other cardiac problems.

So, what can you do? MedlinePlus, a service of the National Institutes of Health, offers a wide variety of resources online. Take a few minutes to browse its “Obesity in Children”

page (<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/obesityinchildren.html>) and see what ideas might work best for your family. The first link on the site is an online publication called “Helping Your Overweight Child” from the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. Its guidance includes:

- Be supportive. Be sure your daughter knows that you accept her at any weight.
- Encourage healthy eating habits by serving more fruits and vegetables, offering more water and low-fat milk, and buying fewer high-calorie snacks and fast foods.
- Encourage physical activity — kids need about 60 minutes a day. Set a good example by increasing your own activity, and treat it as fun instead of a chore. Help your daughter find things she is comfortable doing — many overweight children are embarrassed to participate in sports but do enjoy activities such as dancing and biking.

Other good resources to tap include the Nemours Foundation (http://kidshealth.org/parent/general/body/overweight_obesity.html) and the Mayo Clinic (<http://mayoclinic.com>; search for “child obesity”). With all these resources, you're bound to find something that resonates in your family — then stick with it.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu.



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

OHIO AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH
AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER

**For the week of
June 21, 2009**

By Martha Filipic
(614) 292-9833
filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu

Editor:
This column was reviewed by Julie Shertzer, registered dietitian and program specialist for Ohio State University Extension in the Department of Human Nutrition, in the College of Education and Human Ecology.

**Section of Communications
and Technology
News and Media Relations**
2021 Coffey Road
Columbus, OH 43210-1044
(614) 292-2011

208 Research Services
Building
1680 Madison Ave.
Wooster, OH 44691-4096
(330) 263-3780

Ohio State University Extension embraces human diversity and is committed to ensuring that all research and related educational programs are available to clientele on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, or veteran status. This statement is in accordance with United States Civil Rights Laws and the USDA. *Keith L. Smith, Ph.D., Associate Vice President for Agricultural Administration and Director, Ohio State University Extension*
TDD No. 800-589-8292 (Ohio only) or 614-292-1868