ALL STAT
HOME HEALTH

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Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life—brought to you by the insurance and health care specialists at Bouchard Insurance.

Children's Health: Obesity

Today, 30 percent of children and teens in the U.S. are overweight or obese. Public health officials have classified childhood obesity as an epidemic.

How Does Being Overweight Affect a Child's Health?
Overweight children are at a much greater risk for health problems now and in the future than children who are within a healthy weight range. Serious weight-related conditions such as high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, Type 2 diabetes, asthma, accelerated growth, hip or knee pain, depression, low self-esteem, sleep apnea, and liver and gallbladder problems are seen more frequently by pediatricians in overweight children.

The longer a child remains overweight, the greater the risk for serious long-term health problems. Have your pediatrician measure your child's Body Mass Index-for-age to determine whether your child is underweight, at a healthy weight, at risk of being overweight, or is already overweight or obese.

Help Your Overweight Child
If your child is diagnosed as overweight or obese, you will need to be supportive. That support comes in a variety of ways, incorporating both your

child's mental and physical needs. For example, you should:
• Provide emotional support.
• Teach and promote healthy habits.
• Encourage healthy eating.
• Encourage physical activity.
• Model healthy eating and exercise in your own life.

Weight-Loss Programs
A growing child's nutritional needs differ from those of adults. Too few calories or restricting the wrong foods can interfere with proper growth. Therefore, do not put your child on a weight-loss diet unless recommended to by your health care provider. Under professional guidance, setting realistic weight loss goals will help to avoid discouraging your child. Help him or her focus on small, gradual changes, which will also help build healthy habits that can last a lifetime.

Why Are More Children Today Overweight?
Poor nutrition (including increased consumption of processed foods, fast foods, sugars and refined flours) and inactivity (increased use of

electronic media, less physical activity in school and riding in vehicles instead of walking) are the leading causes of obesity in children. There are genetic reasons some children are overweight as well, but the vast majority are overweight because of the imbalance between calories eaten and calories burned.

Healthy eating and regular physical activity are both the prevention and the "cure" for overweight children. Prevention is easier and more effective when parents start early, so promote healthy eating and exercise habits at an early age, incorporate them into your family and reinforce them as your child grows.

Did you know...?
In the last 30 years, children's consumption of soft drinks has doubled, while their consumption of milk has decreased 40 percent. In addition, the consumption of fast food by children has increased *fivefold* since 1970.