



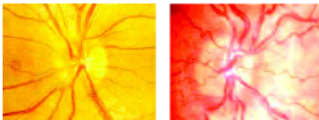
Partnering with community members and organizations to make deliberate choices that lead to healthier children.

Physical impacts of obesity on children

⊗ BRAIN

Obese children are prone to pseudotumor cerebri, a little-understood buildup of pressure in fluid around the brain. It can cause severe headaches and impaired vision. At least one study has suggested obese children might also tend toward lower IQs and be more likely to have brain lesions similar to those seen in Alzheimer's patients.

To diagnose pseudotumor cerebri, doctors look for the presence of swollen optic nerves called papilledema, seen by examining the back of the eye.



NORMAL

SWOLLEN

⊗ LUNGS

Fat deposits in the chest wall can push against the lungs and diaphragm, making it harder for the lungs to expand and bring in oxygen. An obese child can feel out of breath while standing still.

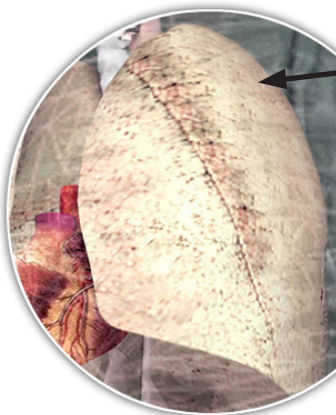
Obese children are two to five times as likely to develop sleep apnea, in which breathing is temporarily interrupted during sleep when the thicker tissues in the throat and neck sag. As a result, less oxygen is sent to the brain, which can hamper a child's ability to concentrate and learn. Sleep apnea can also heighten the risk of heart attack and stroke.

Among children 6 to 17, hospitalizations for sleep apnea increased fivefold from the late 1970s to the late 1990s.

ASTHMA

Obesity increases the risk of asthma, a disease in which the airways become constricted. Having asthma can trigger a cycle in which a child is unable to be physically active and therefore gains weight.

Obese children have a twofold risk of asthma.



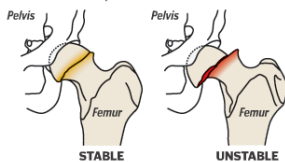
NORMAL BRONCHIOLE

ASTHMA

BONES and GROWTH PLATES

In a child, there are special structures at the end of most bones called growth plates. The growth plate is made of a type of cartilage that lengthens the bone as a person grows.

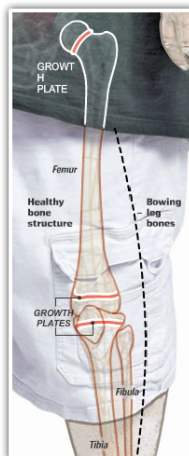
The top part of the thigh bone is shaped like a ball that fits into the hip socket.



In a condition called slipped capital femoral epiphysis, the top of the ball slips off the femoral head through the growth plate. Think of the ball as a scoop of ice cream that falls off the "cone," the thighbone. In obese children, the bone and cartilage are not strong enough to bear excess weight.

BLOUNT'S DISEASE

Excessive weight on the growth plate of the tibia can cause the lower leg to angle inward, resembling a bowleg. Unlike bowlegs, which tend to straighten as a child develops, Blount's disease is progressive and the condition worsens. This condition is more common among African American children.



Click on a body part to learn about the effects of obesity

Hormonal Changes and Metabolic Syndrome

