

Key Obesity-Related Behaviors of Adults and Children

Behavior	Key evidence
Avoiding physical activity	Exercise, particularly in combination with dietary change, promoting weight loss among adults. ⁴⁹ School-based programs that include promotion of physical activity are effective in preventing obesity among children. ⁵⁰
Consuming soft drinks and other sweet beverages	Intake of sugar-sweetened beverages contributes to obesity in children and adults. ⁵¹ Consuming 12 oz or more of fruit juice per day is associated with increased stature and obesity in children (cross-sectional study). ⁵²
Eating fast food	Frequently consuming fast food is associated with higher energy intake and higher BMI among adults (large cross-sectional study). ⁵³ Children who consume fast food have poorer quality diets and higher energy intakes compared with those who do not (large survey). ⁵⁴
Not having family meals (for children and adolescents)	Frequency of eating dinner with the family is associated with a lower baseline risk of being overweight among adolescents and an increased longitudinal risk of becoming overweight (cross-sectional and longitudinal study). ⁵⁵ Family dinner is associated with healthier dietary intake in adolescents (cross-sectional study). ⁵⁶
Skipping breakfast	Children and adolescents who consistently eat breakfast are less likely to be overweight (systematic review). ⁵⁷ Skipping breakfast is ineffective for controlling weight. Regularly eating breakfast is associated with a lower BMI (secondary analysis of NHANES III data). ⁵⁸
Watching television	Adults who watch four or more hours of television per day are as likely to be overweight as those who watch less than two hours per day. ⁵⁹ The odds ratio of being overweight is 4.6 (95% confidence interval 2.9-9.6) among young persons who watch more than five hours per day compared with those who watch zero to two hours per day (study). ⁶⁰ A school-based intervention designed to reduce television viewing time resulted in a statistically significant relative decrease in overweight prevalence with no intervention. ⁶¹

BMI = body mass index; NHANES III = Third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. Information from references 49 through 61.