



Oxiris Barbot, MD
Commissioner

Gotham Center
42-09 28th St., Eighth Floor
Queens, NY 11101-4132

Dear Health Care Professional:

Maintaining a healthy weight in childhood is an important component of building a healthy future. The prevalence of obesity among children in the United States remains high, and recent findings¹ show that nearly 40 percent of New York City public school children have overweight or obesity.* In addition, children of any weight may not get enough proper nutrients in their diets. Even among children whose parents describe their child's health as excellent, fewer than 25 percent report that their child eats the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables daily.²

A lack of affordable and healthy food options, limited opportunities for safe physical activity outdoors and advertisements for junk foods and sugary drinks targeted at children can make it challenging for children and their families to maintain healthy diets and weights.

As a primary care provider, addressing these social and environmental factors can help your patients and their families. The New York City Health Department recommends that you:

1. Assess all children and youth ages 0 to 21 using age-appropriate tools to identify those with overweight and obesity or who are at risk for obesity.
2. Screen all families for food insecurity and refer them to a food-assistance program, such as Women, Infant and Children (WIC); Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); and local emergency food providers.
3. Engage children, youth and families about strategies to prevent and address obesity, such as eating healthy foods, being physically active, getting enough sleep, avoiding sugary drinks, limiting screen time and choosing breastfeeding. Reinforce these messages at every visit.
4. Connect families to appropriate behavioral interventions, community programs and ways to support healthy eating and physical activity opportunities in their communities.

This Pediatric Obesity Action Kit provides clinical tools, provider resources and patient education materials to help you identify and manage obesity and overweight among your patients and link them to resources. Your Health Department representative is visiting today to discuss ways to integrate these tools into your practice.

Working together, we can improve the health of all New Yorkers.

Sincerely,

Oxiris Barbot, MD

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New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

* People with obesity are often subject to bias and discrimination. Using people-first language (e.g., "children with obesity") avoids labeling individuals and can help foster a positive relationship between patients and providers.

¹ Among New York City public school students, grades kindergarten through eighth grade. Data Source: NYC Fitnessgram Data, 2012-2013.

² New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. NYC child health, emotional wellness and development survey, 2015.