



## COMBATING CHILDHOOD OBESITY



### A common issue

In today's world, childhood obesity is an increasingly worrisome topic across the world. Increasing sedentary lifestyles, unhealthy dietary habits and excessive screen time are contributing to a rising number of children who are overweight or obese. If not addressed early, childhood obesity can lead to serious health complications and may continue into adulthood, increasing the risk of chronic diseases.

Childhood obesity occurs when a child has excess body fat that negatively affects their health. It is usually caused by an imbalance between calories consumed and calories burned. High consumption of processed foods, sugary drinks and fast food, combined with low levels of physical activity, are the primary catalysts. Nowadays, children spend more time on smartphones, computers and television instead of playing outdoors.

### Adversely affecting health

There are significant health risks associated with childhood obesity. Overweight children are more likely to develop type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and breathing problems like asthma.

Obesity can also affect a child's emotional well-being. Many children experience low self-esteem, bullying, anxiety or depression due to their weight.

### Fighting the fat

Parents play a crucial role in preventing and managing childhood obesity. One effective strategy is to promote healthy eating habits at home. Children should be encouraged to consume balanced meals that include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins and dairy products. Limiting sugary snacks, fried foods and packaged items also help maintain a healthy weight.

**Regular physical activity is extremely important.** Children need to engage in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day. Activities such as cycling, swimming, running or outdoor games help burn calories and improve overall fitness. Parents should encourage children to take evening walks or play weekend sports and stay active.

**One cannot miss out on reducing screen time as well.** Experts recommend limiting recreational screen time to less than two hours per day. Replacing screen time with hobbies, reading, creative play or sports helps children develop healthier routines.

**Schools and communities also have an important role to play.** School programmes that promote physical education, nutritious meals and health awareness can significantly influence children's habits.

To sum up, addressing childhood obesity requires a collaborative effort from parents, schools, healthcare providers and society. By promoting healthy eating, encouraging regular exercise and fostering positive lifestyle habits from an early age, we can help children grow into healthier adults.