

# Healthy Weight, Healthy Life

A Medically Supervised Approach to Childhood Obesity



Stony Brook Children's  
Healthy Weight & Wellness Center



## Positive. Multidisciplinary. Child Focused. Family Friendly.

The Healthy Weight and Wellness Center brings the resources of Suffolk County's only academic medical center to one of the next generation's most pressing health problems: obesity. Today, one in three American children and adolescents falls within the definition of overweight or obese. This excess weight can result in:

- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Joint pain
- Sleep apnea
- Stigmatization
- Poor self-esteem
- Depression
- Anxiety

And when obese children grow up to be obese adults, the consequences escalate. The health risks for obese adults include all of the above plus heart disease, stroke, several types of cancer, infertility, osteoarthritis and other issues.

**But there are solutions.** To successfully address serious weight problems in young people, a unique approach is required. It must be positive, highly individualized, multidisciplinary and family friendly. That's exactly what we provide at the Healthy Weight and Wellness Center. Our treatment programs are designed to help children and adolescents lose weight safely while preparing them to successfully maintain a healthy weight as adults.





## What Is Obesity?

Obesity is not just a matter of a few extra pounds. It is a clinically defined health condition deserving evidence-based, effective treatment.

For children the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) defines overweight as a Body Mass Index (BMI) at or above the 85th percentile and lower than the 95th percentile, and obesity as a BMI at or above the 95th percentile for children of the same age and sex. Our program focuses on children and adolescents whose BMI is above the 85th percentile with or without weight-related medical conditions such as high cholesterol or high blood pressure.

## What Causes Obesity?

When more calories are taken in than the body can use, the unused calories are stored as fat. When this occurs repeatedly over time, obesity can develop. Many factors come into play: overeating and a poor diet, lack of exercise, medical issues such as endocrine or neurological problems, medications such as steroids and certain psychiatric drugs, depression or emotional problems, family and social stressors, or a family history of obesity.

Our culture plays a role, too. The prevalence of fast food, enlarged portions and inactive forms of entertainment (television, computers, cell phones) contribute to the rise in obesity across America. Obesity in children has more than doubled in children and tripled in adolescents during the past 30 years.

## How Is Obesity Successfully Treated?

The key to successful treatment is evidence-based, comprehensive, multidisciplinary intervention that is individualized to the needs of the patient. For children and adolescents, it also requires that we make things fun, interesting, 100 percent positive and supported by the family.

At the Healthy Weight and Wellness Center, we put this into practice by developing each child's treatment plan specifically for his or her needs. Both child and family work with a team that includes credentialed experts in all aspects of obesity: exercise, nutrition, medical, surgical, psychological and social issues. We offer information and encouragement every step of the way, including lively and fun group sessions known as FitU. And we pay as much attention to weight maintenance for the long term as we do to weight loss in the present.







## What Does the Program Involve?

Our comprehensive, multidisciplinary program covers all the bases your child needs to succeed. Each aspect of the program is customizable to the specific needs of the patient and family. Major components include:

**Medical Assessment and Monitoring.** Our program begins with a physician's referral. We conduct a detailed intake evaluation with appropriate medical screenings for health issues common to obesity. Assessments continue periodically. If medical conditions are suspected, our pediatric subspecialists provide consultation as needed.

**Diet Change.** Most patients meet monthly for six months with our registered dietitians. Together, they review the patient's diet, analyze nutrient intake and develop an individualized eating plan. We also work with the family to provide education on meal planning, label reading, food choices and recipe modifications.

**Fitness.** We also work to improve the patient's overall fitness level and calorie burning activity. Our physical therapist recommends an activity program designed to help each patient burn more calories, build strength and increase endurance.

**Behavior Modification and Support.** Access to psychological assistance and support is offered through the Krasner Psychological Center. We assess the patient and family's readiness to change and offer individual and group sessions supporting behavior and lifestyle modifications.

**Motivation in FitU sessions.** A key part of our program is FitU. Conducted by a registered dietitian and a physical therapist, these informative and motivational sessions combine medically supervised nutrition counseling, behavioral therapy and exercise along with family support. Groups are small, age-appropriate and meet bi-weekly.

## About Our Team

Compassionate and committed to helping young people achieve a healthy weight, our team is led by a board-certified pediatrician and includes registered dietitians, physical therapists, medical assistants and psychologists. Because obesity can be related to or cause other medical conditions, we also have subspecialists available to become part of your child's healthcare team as needed. In addition, we work with Stony Brook's renowned adult bariatric team when older adolescents are considering a bariatric surgical procedure. We also maintain close communications with your family physician or community pediatrician.

## Team Members

Clinic Medical Director/  
Patient Care  
Rosa Cataldo, DO, MPH

Clinic Registered Dietitian  
Charlene Brechisci, MS, RD, CDN

Administrative Assistant  
Sharon Zucker

Physical Therapy  
Candiano Rienzie, PT, DPT

Psychology  
Dina Vivian, PhD

Bariatric Surgery  
Aurora Pryor, MD  
Dana Telem, MD

## Our Research and Education Commitment

Finding new and better ways to prevent and treat obesity is an ongoing priority at the Healthy Weight and Wellness Center. In keeping with Stony Brook's academic medical center tradition, our team works to advance obesity research on several fronts: identifying gaps in current research, applying essential statistics and investigating new techniques and technologies.

Our team also welcomes opportunities to provide outreach to young people and families within the community. Two ways that we achieve this are by presenting educational programs at local schools and fortifying our relationships with community healthcare providers.

## CONTACT US

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A physician referral is required to enter the program,  
but we are happy to answer questions,  
or refer you to a physician if you don't have one, at any time.

For appointments, please call  
(631) 444-KIDS.



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