Promoting Healthier Weight
in Pediatrics

VCHIP
Vermont Child Health Improvement Program
UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

VERMONT
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Acknowledgements

This toolkit was originally developed in 2008, through collaboration between the Vermont Child Health Improvement Program, the Vermont Department of Health, and the University of Vermont College of Medicine, and with extensive input from the primary care community. In 2014, this toolkit was updated to reflect current standards of practice, guidelines, and best practices. We would like to thank all of those whose collaboration went into the first edition.

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Introduction

Promoting a healthy weight, good nutrition, and physical activity provides health care practitioners the opportunity to reduce the rates of overweight and obesity in children and youth. Counseling children and families allows clinicians a chance to establish long term health benefits and prevent lifestyle related chronic conditions. In Vermont, 12% of low income children between two and five years of age are obese and according to the recent Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey, three in ten youths in grades 9 through 12 are overweight or obese.

This toolkit was designed to help health care practitioners develop their own approach to reach these goals, and to achieve the following office visit goals recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) guidelines for the prevention of overweight and obesity in children and adolescents. Although we acknowledge the important issues around being underweight (BMI < 5 %ile), these very different issues are not addressed in this toolkit.

Office visit goals for all children & adolescents

- Calculate and plot BMI once a year
- Document current weight status
- Assess current nutrition and physical activity
- Counsel families to develop healthy nutrition and physical activity behaviors

Vermonters look to their health care practitioners for health information. Vermont data shows that adults who are counseled by their health care practitioners are more likely to try healthier behaviors than patients not counseled. Pediatric providers can focus on prevention right from the start by helping families adopt healthy behaviors.

Helping families change health-related behaviors can be difficult, however. The information included here will introduce you to basic concepts. You may want to pursue additional training or reading. References and additional resources are included at the end.

All aspects of the toolkit should be used in combination with clinical judgment and sensitivity for this often challenging topic. Use the tools that will help you meet the office goals listed above.