

# Tackling childhood obesity: Simple habits and smart swaps for a healthier life

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**With rising childhood obesity rates, making mindful food choices and staying active is more important than ever. Simple habits and smart swaps can help build a healthier future. Learn how small changes in diet and lifestyle can make a big difference.**



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Overweight and obesity are a growing threat to children's well-being globally, largely driven by aggressive junk food marketing that increases the demand for unhealthy and highly processed foods. Lack of physical activity, sedentary lifestyle and increasing screen time is another concern. Cumulatively, this is a recipe for an unhealthy childhood and adolescence. Obesity is a major risk factor for various noncommunicable diseases, such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, hypertension and stroke, and various forms of cancer, India today spoke with Marie-Claude Desilets, Chief, Nutrition UNICEF India.

According to UNICEF, almost 40 million under-five years old children around the world are overweight, equivalent to nearly 6 percent of this age group. Among children aged 5 to 19 years, rates are significantly higher; it is estimated that more than 340 million are overweight, almost 18 percent. In India, the National Family & Health Survey 5 (2019/21) revealed that 3 percent of children under five years of age and 24 percent of women 15-49 years were overweight or obese. The trend is fast rising. These are conditions that

disadvantage children from early age and can lead to a lifetime of diseases, including diabetes, hypertension, cancer and heart disease. According to WHO, globally obesity rates have nearly tripled since 1975 and have increased almost five times in children and adolescents, affecting people of all ages from all social groups in both developed and developing countries.Â