

Recognizing Weight-Based Bullying

What is weight-based bullying?

Weight-based bullying is when a child with obesity is teased and harassed because of their body weight.

What are the consequences of weight-based bullying?

Over time, children may develop poor self-esteem and negative feelings towards themselves. The child may become irritable, have trouble sleeping, and may lose interest in doing things with others. Bullying can even lead to mental health issues like anxiety and depression.

What does weight-based bullying look like?

It takes many forms! It can be verbal or written. It can be done face-to-face or **online**.

Cyberbullying is online bullying (social media, apps, online games, etc.) that includes things like sending hurtful messages, sharing embarrassing pictures, spreading lies, and telling others to leave them out on purpose. Weight-based bullying can come from other children and even adults like family members, teachers, and healthcare providers.

How does weight-based bullying impact children?

Children who experience weight-based bullying are more likely to experience:

Low Self-Esteem

Anxiety

Depression

Negative Body Image

**Suicidal Thoughts
& Behaviors**

**Lower
Quality of Life**



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What may indicate that my child is experiencing weight-based bullying?

Your child:

- is uncomfortable talking about their weight.
- is sensitive about their appearance and/or how clothing fits.
- avoids participating in physical activities because they are self-conscious.
- avoids school activities or does not like going to school.

What can you do if you think your child is participating in weight-based bullying?

- Ask them, "Do you ever see others picking on kids because of their weight?" and "What do you do when you see this happening?"
- Let them know teasing is not OK.
- Talk to them about body diversity and challenge their weight bias(es).

What can you do if you think your child is experiencing weight-based bullying?

- Ask them, "Does anyone ever pick on you?" Let them know they aren't in trouble, and it's not their fault!
- Make sure it isn't happening at home.
- Let them know teasing is not OK.
- Tell them if a bully approaches them, stay calm, get away from the bully, and tell an adult what is happening right away.
- Help them find a friend or adult they trust to help when needed
- Talk to adults wherever bullying is happening so they can be aware and do something about it.
- Support your child by encouraging them to safely engage with social media



Take-Away Message:

Remind your child bullying is not their fault! Bodies come in all shapes and sizes. Let them know all the wonderful qualities they have that have nothing to do with their weight.

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