Psychological treatment of childhood obesity: main principles and pitfalls

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Main principles of psychological treatment

- Multidisciplinary approach: nutritional advice, physical activity and behavioural therapy
- Realistic treatment goals
- Focus on healthy lifestyle in the long term
- Importance to work with:
  - Children
  - AND the parents
Working with children

• Self monitoring: food and activity records
• Nutritional and physical activity advices
• Goal setting and contract
• Evaluation and reinforcement
• Stimuluscontrol technique
• Coping and problem solving skills
Working with parents

• Nutritional advice

• Cognitive behaviour therapy: parenting skills to support lifestyle changes:
  – Positive involvement
  – Rule setting and consequent disciplining
  – Problem solving skills
Pitfalls

• Realistic expectations about the treatment goals
• Good communication about the rational of the treatment
• Promoting a supportive network
• Build in extra motivational techniques
• Correct evaluation of the severity of the weight problem and comorbid problems
• Psychiatric co-morbidity demands careful evaluation and selection of which disorder has to be treated first.
• Estimating the patients’ strength