

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 rationale 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