

# Understanding causes of obesity in Aboriginal children

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To fully understand the causes of the obesity epidemic in Aboriginal children requires an understanding of the unique social and historical factors that shape the Aboriginal community. A review article published in *Applied Physiology, Nutrition, and Metabolism* emphasizes that early childhood obesity prevention efforts should begin focusing with the parents before and during pregnancy and on breastfeeding initiatives and nutrition in the early childhood development stages.

"There needs to be a focus on improving the risk factors such as income and education" says Noreen Willows, one of the authors of the study. "Additionally, there needs to be a focus on embracing the cultural practices in terms of language and pride in the Aboriginal culture to influence health behaviours and outcomes".

Numerous environments at different times of childhood drive the risk of [childhood obesity](#): the in utero environment, which influences birth weight, growth patterns and disease risk; the [family environment](#), in which the child is raised and nurtured; and the larger surrounding environments encompassing policy, community, and cultural and societal factors.

There is no one fix to the [obesity epidemic](#) in Aboriginal children. Strategies for weight management in this population need to focus at changing all influential factors at each level of the child's environment, and the members of the community need to have an active role in pursuing this goal.

**More information:** Willows, N.D, Hanley, A.J.G., Delormier, T. 2012. A socioecological framework to understand weight-related issues in Aboriginal children in Canada. *Applied Physiology, Nutrition, and Metabolism*, 37(1) 1-13. [doi:10.1139/H11-128](https://doi.org/10.1139/H11-128)

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