

Are hormones causing my child's weight gain?

June 25 2014, by Anne Dillon

The number of children who are obese remains alarmingly high in the U.S. and, unfortunately, diseases associated with obesity are on the rise. Worried about their overweight children, many parents wonder whether other diagnoses, such as hypothyroidism, could be the reason behind their child's weight gain.

More often than not, however, the underlying issues are environmental factors, such as a sedentary lifestyle or consumption of more calories than a child needs. Researchers are currently studying what role other environmental influences and genetic profiles may play in childhood obesity.

"Parents understand that obesity is a very serious condition. They are looking for ways to help their child become healthy and often get sidetracked from the real issues. Rarely some children may have a hormonal issue. However, this constitutes less than 1 percent of all causes of childhood obesity," said Himala Kashmiri, DO, head of pediatric endocrinology at Loyola University Health System and assistant professor in the Department of Pediatrics at Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine. "More commonly, [weight gain](#) and subsequent obesity are the consequence of a child's environment and predisposed risk for [obesity](#)."

"If children stop their linear height or slow down in regards to height gain or are otherwise shorter than would be expected due to parent's height, then that certainly could and should raise concern for hormonal

imbalances that may be leading to weight gain. Weight gain alone, however, is not solely a sign of hormonal imbalance," Kashmiri said.

Other signs that a child may have a hormonal issue include:

- Drinking and urinating more than before
- Excessive hunger
- Experiencing unexplained weight loss
- Feeling of tired and cold
- Bowel irregularities
- Changes to hair, skin or nails
- Poor linear growth or short stature

"If your child has weight gain along with these other symptoms, it's important to talk to your pediatrician about seeing a specialist," Kashmiri said. "Although [severe obesity](#) continues to rise, strategies to intervene and prevent [childhood obesity](#) actually are effective. These include decreasing sugary beverages, portion control, limiting fast food, making healthier food choices, increasing physical activity and decreasing screen time.

"Obesity can lead to numerous health issues, such as diabetes, elevated cholesterol, poor self-esteem, liver disease, [high blood pressure](#) and even cancer" he said. If your child is gaining weight, talk to your pediatrician about resources and strategies to help with weight management and decreasing your child's risk for these potential consequences."

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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