

Malnutrition occurs in children who are either undernourished or overnourished.

Read more: [Malnutrition - baby, swollen, symptoms, average, Definition, Description, Demographics http://www.healthofchildren.com/M/Malnutrition.html#b#ixzz22AEykaXy](http://www.healthofchildren.com/M/Malnutrition.html#b#ixzz22AEykaXy)

Poor eating habits or lack of available food may lead to malnutrition. Children who are overnourished may become overweight or obese, which may lead to long-term health problems and social stress.

Overnutrition

In the United States, nutritional deficiencies have generally been replaced by dietary imbalances or excesses associated with many of the leading causes of death and disability. Overnutrition results from eating too much, eating too many of the wrong foods, not exercising enough, or taking too many vitamins or other dietary replacements.

Risk of overnutrition is also increased by being more than 20 percent overweight, consuming a diet high in fat and salt, and taking high doses of:

- nicotinic acid (niacin) to lower elevated cholesterol levels
- vitamin B₆ to relieve premenstrual syndrome
- vitamin A to clear up skin problems
- iron or other trace **minerals** not prescribed by a doctor

Nutritional disorders can affect any system in the body and the senses of sight, taste, and smell. Malnutrition begins with changes in nutrient levels in blood and tissues. Alterations in enzyme levels, tissue abnormalities, and organ malfunction may be followed by illness and death.

Complications

Poorly nourished children often have weakened immune systems, thus increasing their chances of illness. Underweight, malnourished teenagers (such as those with an eating disorder) have an increased risk of osteoporosis and may not have menstrual periods. They may have heart and other organ problems with severe malnutrition. Malnutrition, if left untreated, can lead to physical or mental disability, or even death.

Children who are overweight have an increased risk for long-term conditions and diseases, including cardiovascular disease, **high cholesterol**, high blood pressure, type 2

diabetes, **asthma**, **sleep** apnea, and certain cancers. Health consequences range from a higher risk of premature death to chronic conditions that reduce a person's quality of life.