

# One Mistake That Can Affect Your Child's Weight

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## Real Simple:

Parents who think their children are overweight may trigger a self-fulfilling prophecy, according to a new analysis of two decade-long studies. Kids whose parents considered them chunky at age 4 or 5 tended to put on more pounds in subsequent years, compared to those whose parents thought they were a normal weight.

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“Younger children don’t have the brain capacity to understand all the grey areas when it comes to gaining or losing weight,” Leslie Connor, PhD, a counseling psychologist in Wilmington, Delaware, told *Health* at the time. “We now know that when you focus on the numbers, you’re virtually pushing a child in the same direction as teasing or bullying would,” she added.

So what *should* parents do if they’re worried about their kids’ weight? Focus on the positive, says co-author Angelina R. Sutin, PhD, assistant professor of psychology at Florida State University. For young children, provide healthy food and opportunities for regular exercise. “It is more productive to teach children the skills necessary to be healthy than to make comments about weight without offering concrete support to make change,” says Sutin.

Read the whole story: [Real Simple](#)