

# SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISPARITIES IN PRE-ADOLESCENT OBESITY TREATMENT: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

**Overweight and obesity** affect more than 25% of children in Europe, and over 40% in some individual countries. Obesity can lead to serious **negative physical and mental health impacts**, including endocrine complications, early development of cardiovascular disease and type-2 diabetes, lower self-esteem and increased stigmatisation.

Children from population groups exposed to **socio-economic vulnerabilities** tend to be disproportionately affected by obesity.

While many countries aim to reduce inequities in health, there are surprisingly few systematic analyses of how **social disparities influence the success of child obesity treatments**.

## Data gap confirmed

The current review **confirms the lack of high-quality data** on this question.

Such lack of knowledge **hampers the development of good practices and coherent national guidance on treating childhood obesity**.

This is especially a problem for 3 to 10-year-old children, given that treatment in this age category mainly relies on behavioural interventions, rather than surgical or pharmaceutical ones.

## But some findings do emerge

Although larger reviews face difficulties in reaching general conclusions, **observations from individual studies attest to the likely relevance of social, ethnic and economic background for treatment outcomes**.

Potentially relevant factors include:

- the degree of commitment, resources, organisational capacity, cohesion and motivation from the family and the child;
- the level of maternal education;
- the importance of cultural appropriateness of interventions;
- the levels of stress experienced by families, associated with socio-economic disadvantage.

This implies the likelihood that interventions need to be **culturally and socially sensitive, avoiding stigma, encouraging motivation, recognising barriers and reinforcing opportunities**.

## The bottom line

The bottom line is that while social disparities seem to matter, **there is insufficient good quality evidence on how to address inequities in child obesity treatment**.

It is therefore crucial **to obtain such information as part of future research**, so that results can better inform interventions and policies.

[article citation]

Find out more about the STOP project here: [stopchildobesity.eu](http://stopchildobesity.eu)





Science and Technology in  
childhood Obesity Policy

# Childhood obesity treatment linked to social disparities

The effectiveness of interventions to treat childhood obesity  
may depend on social disparities such as:



ETHNICITY



INCOME



PARENTS'  
EDUCATION



HEALTH INSURANCE  
STATUS

## Socio-economic status (SES): a barrier to treatment



## Policy needs to focus on a way to adapt treatment to socio-economic backgrounds



NO STIGMA



ENCOURAGE  
MOTIVATION



RECOGNISE  
BARRIERS



REINFORCE  
OPPORTUNITIES

