

Healthy Weight and Your Child

Children who weigh too much are at risk for health problems like:

- high blood pressure
- high cholesterol
- diabetes

Children are also open to teasing from other children. This may make your child feel bad. Your doctor can tell you if your child's weight is within a healthy range, so don't forget to ask about it.

What is a good way to talk to children about weight?

Explain to your children that people come in different shapes and sizes. Let them know that you love them no matter what their size. Avoid saying "skinny" or "fat." Do not tease them about weight. It is best to talk about eating and being active as a family issue, not as the child's "problem." Explain to your children that you want them "to be healthy." Explain that the whole family is going to work on eating better and being more active.

The number of children who weigh more than they should has doubled in the last 20 years. This is mainly because of the types of foods we eat and not being active enough. As a parent/guardian you can help. You can help prevent weight problems and improve your child's health.

Want to prevent some weight problems? Play for 60 minutes instead of watching TV.



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What are some ways to help children get more active?

Not moving enough can cause weight gain in children. Instead of being active, many children today watch TV or play video games. They are just not moving enough every day. Small changes in movement over time can affect health and weight. Here are some steps you can take to help your child get moving.

1 Allow time to play hard - at least 60 minutes a day.

- Go for group walks
- Play jump rope
- Play catch/Frisbee
- Dance to favorite music
- House and yard chores (vacuum, rake, garden)

2 Limit TV and video games to *no more than one hour a day*. Remove the TV from the child's bedroom. Encourage your child to read, play games or go for a walk.

Any increase in movement or progress in healthy eating is great!

Here are more healthy eating tips

1 Offer 5 helpings of fruits and vegetables (veggies) *daily*. (1 helping is 1/2 to 1 cup)

2 Offer these foods *more often...*

- chicken, turkey, fish, beans, peas
- fruits and veggies
- nonfat or low fat milk or yogurt, low-fat cheese, low-fat cottage cheese
- baked, boiled, broiled or steamed foods
- whole wheat bread, bagels, tortillas, rice, pasta

3 Offer water instead of juices or sodas.

4 Limit juice drinks, sports drinks, and sodas to *no more than 1 can or small cup a day*.

5 Offer these foods *less often...*

- chips, cookies, pastries, french fries, crackers
- ice cream, chocolate milk, candy, juice bars
- pan fried or deep-fat fried foods
- hot dogs, bacon, cold cuts
- butter, margarine, gravy

Since children do not, as a rule, eat too much, you do not need to limit the amount of food they eat. You just need to provide healthy choices!

What are some ways to help children have better eating habits?

- Offer three balanced meals a day and planned snacks.
- Provide breakfast every day, even if you are short on time. Some good choices include: Cereal, nonfat milk, yogurt, fruit, or toast.
- You decide when and where to serve meals and which foods to serve. Let your child decide whether or not to eat and how much to eat.
- Eat meals together as a family as often as possible. Work around busy schedules. This can be a time for talking about the day and sharing.
- Keep healthy foods your child likes within easy reach at home. Keep "junk" foods out of the house.
- Try not to bribe or reward your child with food.
- Limit eating at fast fast food places to no more than once a week. Fast food tends to be high in salt, fat and extra calories. Avoid "supersized meals" and drinks.
- Don't eat while watching TV.
- Let your child help with a shopping list and cooking meals.
- Check with your child's school or day care center to make sure they serve healthy meals and snacks. If not, pack a healthy lunch for your child.
- Be a good role model by:
 - do not show too much concern about weight
 - eat fruits and veggies
 - be active every day

