



**Help Your Child
Have a Healthy Weight**

Why should I worry if my child is overweight?

An overweight child may:

- Have health problems, such as:
 - Diabetes, high blood pressure, or high cholesterol
 - Sleep apnea
 - Respiratory disease
 - Gallbladder disease
 - Bowing of the legs or pain in the hip joints
- Not feel good about himself/herself.
- Have a hard time making friends.
- Not want to join other children in play or physical activities.
- Become an overweight adult.

How can I play actively every day with my child?

Turn off the television and computer and join your child in fun activities. Encourage 30 – 60 minutes of physical activity per day. Fun activities can include:

- Dancing
- Biking
- Walking / running
- Playing ball
- Swimming
- Playing hide and seek
- Jumping rope



What I will do for my child every day:

- Take time to play with my child.
- Offer healthy foods and snacks.
- Limit time my child spends watching television or playing on the computer to less than 2 hours a day.
- Trust my child to know when he/she is full.
- Show my child I love him/her no matter how much he weighs.

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Give smart snacks

- Fruits and vegetables
- Whole-grain crackers and pretzels, small whole-grain bagels or English muffins, popcorn without butter
- Animal or graham crackers, vanilla wafers
- Baked potato chips or baked tortilla chips
- Rice cakes
- Fruit and nut trail mix (choking hazard for children younger than 4)
- Unsweetened cereal
- Low-fat cheese, low-fat string cheese sticks
- Low-fat yogurt or low-fat pudding
- Fruit smoothies
- Frozen fruit bars



How do I teach healthy eating habits?

- Be a good example. Your child will learn what to eat and how to stay physically active by watching you.
- You decide what foods to serve and when your child eats. Let your child decide how much to eat.
- Sit down and have meals together as a family. Family meals promote bonding and good nutrition.
- Have three regular meals with two to three healthy snacks in between.
- Try not to reward or bribe with food. This may encourage your child to eat when he/she is not hungry.
- Find out what meals, snacks, and drinks your child is getting at day care. Make sure your child is getting healthy foods and drinks in child-sized portions.
- Teach your children to drink water instead of soft drinks, fruit drinks, sports drinks, nectars, juice, or lots of milk.
- Try not to overly restrict foods or force your child to eat everything on his/her plate. This encourages overeating.
- Prepare meals at home. Meals made at home tend to be healthier than meals made outside the home. Limit fast foods and processed, packaged foods.
- Food is often used to show love. Instead, show love by giving hugs, playtime, reading books, etc.
- Help your child find sources of comfort, pleasure, and fun in other ways rather than from eating food.



Parenting tips

- Healthy changes are for the whole family. Small changes to your family's diet and physical activity can help.
- Tell your child that he/she is loved, special, and important.
- Accept your child at any weight.
- Listen to your child's concerns about his/her weight.
- Watch what you say about your own body. A parent's poor body image can shape their child's body image.
- Be positive. You are a good parent!



How can I help my child make healthy food choices?

Serve more of these:	Serve less of these:
No more than two cups (16 ounces) of low-fat (1%) or skim milk a day (ages 2 and older)	Whole milk (after 2 years of age)
Low-fat yogurt or pudding made with low-fat milk	Ice cream
Baked or boiled potatoes and sweet potatoes, plain cooked or raw vegetables	French fries, fried vegetables
Whole wheat bread and pasta, brown rice, unsweetened cereal, corn tortillas	White bread, pasta, and rice; sweetened cereal and pastries
Whole-grain crackers and pretzels, small whole-grain bagels or muffins, popcorn without butter (ages 3 and older)	Doughnuts, sweet rolls, cakes, cookies, candies, pies, chips
Broiled, grilled, or baked chicken (without the skin), fish, turkey, boiled eggs, 94% lean ground beef, beans	Fried or high-fat meats, bologna, hot dogs, sausage, bacon
Fresh fruits and vegetables	Canned fruit with heavy syrup, 100% fruit juice (no more than 1/2 cup per day), fruit punch, fruit drinks, soft drinks, Kool-Aid®, Gatorade®