

Tips for Parents and Grandparents to Help Children Maintain a Healthy Weight

You probably read and seen in the news, that in the Unites States the number of children with obesity has continued to rise over the last 20 years. As parents or concerned adults you may ask, "What steps can we take to prevent obesity in our children? Here are some helpful recommendations s to help you keep your family healthy that comes from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Why is Childhood Obesity a Problem?

- Children with obesity can be bullied and teased more than their normal weight peers. They are also more likely to suffer from social isolation, depression and lower self-esteem. The effects of this can last into adulthood.
- Children with obesity are at higher risk for having other chronic health conditions and diseases, such as asthma, sleep apnea, bone and joint problems, and type 2 diabetes.
- Type 2 diabetes is increasingly being reported among children who are overweight. Onset of diabetes can lead to heart disease and kidney failure.
- Children with obesity are more at a risk for heart disease such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol than their normal weight peers. In a population based sample of 5 to 17 year olds, almost 60 percent of children who were overweight had at least one risk factor of cardiovascular disease (CVD) and 25 percent had two or more of CVD risk factors.
- Children with obesity are more likely to have obesity as adults. This can lead to lifelong physical and mental health problems.

What can parents and caregivers do to help prevent Childhood overweight and obesity?

To help your child maintain a healthy weight, balance the calories your child consumes from foods and beverages with calories your child uses through physical activity and normal growth.

The goal for children who are overweight is to reduce the rate of weight gain while allowing normal growth and development. Children should not be placed on a weight reduction diet without consulting a health care provider.

Balancing Calories: Help Kids Develop Healthy Eating

It is important to provide adequate nutrition and an appropriate number of calories. You can help your children learn to be aware of what they eat by developing healthy eating habits, look for ways to make favorite dishes healthier, and reducing calorie-rich temptations.

To help your children and family develop healthy eating habits:

- Provide plenty of vegetables, fruits and whole grain food.
- Include low-fat or non-fat milk or dairy products.
- Choose lean meats, poultry, fish, nuts and beans for protein.
- Serve reasonably sized portions.
- Encourage your family to drink lots of water

- Limit sugar-sweetened beverages
- Limit consumption of sugar and saturated fats.

Remember that small changes every day can lead to a recipe for success.

Along with healthy eating, exercise is important. Children need to be physically active 60 minutes most days. Just allowing children to play and reducing time watching television and playing video games can be important to increase physical activity.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and ChooseMyPlate.gov.