

# promoting healthy weight in children

smart eating and active play for a healthier tomorrow



## what is a healthy weight?

A healthy weight is the weight your body naturally settles into when you consistently eat nutritiously, are physically active and balance the calories you eat with the physical activity you do. With the current emphasis on overweight and obesity, it may be easy to forget that good health is the ultimate goal and that a healthy lifestyle – not a specific body size, shape or weight – is the avenue to attain that goal. Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight is part of an ongoing lifestyle that if adopted now can stay with you for years to come.



## startling statistics

- **OVERWEIGHT AND DISEASE:** Today nearly 1 in 3 children are overweight. In addition, risk factors for adult chronic diseases are increasingly found in younger ages. More children are being diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, a disease usually found in adults aged 40 years or older. This disease is closely linked to obesity and sedentary lifestyles.
- **INACTIVITY:** Research by the Henry J. Kaiser Foundation has shown that 8-18 year olds spend more than 14 hours a day using entertainment media including the computer, watching TV and playing video games.
- **PORTION DISTORTION:** Portion sizes are now two to five times larger than they were in years past.



## what causes unhealthy weight?

*Numerous factors contribute to weight problems in children and adolescents including heredity or family history, activity level, and eating habits.*

- **HEREDITY:** A tendency to be overweight often runs in families. However, most children are not destined to become overweight. Healthy lifestyle habits have a stronger influence on weight than heredity alone. Your age and metabolism also play important roles.
- **LACK OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY:** Only 8 percent of adolescents (and just 42 percent of 6-11 year olds) participate in 60 minutes of daily physical activity.
- **OVERFED BUT UNDERNOURISHED:** Children are not eating enough nutrient-rich foods. Nearly 40 percent of kids' calories come from foods with low nutrient values. The majority of added sugars come from soft drinks, energy drinks, and sports drinks.

## *What is Overweight and Obesity?*

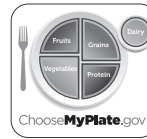
*Overweight and obesity are body weights higher than normal. Growth charts, using Body Mass Index (BMI), are often used to record a child's height and weight. As children grow and bodies change, health professionals look at a child's BMI and track changes over time. A child with a BMI-for-age between the 85th and 95th percentiles is considered overweight. A child with a BMI-for-age at the 95th percentile or higher is considered obese. See your physician or registered dietitian for more information.*





## how can I encourage healthy eating habits for my child?

- **USE USDA'S MYPLATE** as a quick visual reminder to make healthy food choices at your next meal. Make half of the plate fruits and vegetables and include whole grains, lean proteins, and low-fat dairy.
- **ENJOY FOOD TOGETHER.** Make meal time family time. Regularly scheduled meal and snack times help kids learn structure for eating.
- **OFFER KID-SIZE SERVINGS:** Serve smaller helpings to children because adult-size portions may encourage overeating.
- **WAKE UP TO THE BENEFITS OF BREAKFAST:** Children who eat breakfast have higher test scores, are able to concentrate on learning, are healthier and have improved school attendance.
- **SERVE LOW-FAT MILK AND WATER WITH MEALS:** Limit intake of soft drinks, fruit drinks and sport drinks.
- **PLAN AFTERNOON SNACKS:** Stock the kitchen with foods kids need more of: low-fat milk and milk products, fruits, vegetables and whole grains.
- **PAY ATTENTION TO HUNGER CUES:** Your body will tell you if it's hungry or full.
- **RESTRICTIVE DIETS ARE USUALLY NOT APPROPRIATE FOR CHILDREN:** Consult your physician or a registered dietitian for the recommendation of a child-specific weight-management program.



## resources for home and school

Action for Healthy Kids  
[actionforhealthykids.org](http://actionforhealthykids.org)

CDC Growth Charts  
[cdc.gov/growthcharts](http://cdc.gov/growthcharts)

Fuel Up to Play 60  
[FuelUpToPlay60.com](http://FuelUpToPlay60.com)

HealthierUS School Challenge  
[fns.usda.gov/tn/healthierus/index.html](http://fns.usda.gov/tn/healthierus/index.html)

Healthy Weight Network  
[healthyweightnetwork.com](http://healthyweightnetwork.com)

Healthy Youth for a Healthy Future  
Office of the Surgeon General, Childhood Overweight and Obesity Prevention Initiative  
[surgeongeneral.gov/obesityprevention/index.html](http://surgeongeneral.gov/obesityprevention/index.html)

Kids Eat Right  
[KidsEatRight.org](http://KidsEatRight.org)

Kids Walk-To-School  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)  
[cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/kidswalk](http://cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/kidswalk)

Let's Move!  
[letsmove.gov](http://letsmove.gov)

MyPlate  
[choosemyplate.gov](http://choosemyplate.gov)

NUTRITION.gov  
[nutrition.gov](http://nutrition.gov)

SPARK (Sports, Play and Active Recreation for Kids)  
[sparkpe.org](http://sparkpe.org)

We Can! Program  
National Institutes of Health (NIH)  
[wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov)



## how can I help my child be more active?

- **BOUNDARIES:** Set time limits for watching TV, playing video games and using the computer. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than one to two hours per day.
- **PLAY:** Encourage activity every day. Play outdoors, ride a bike, walk the dog, toss a ball.
- **FAMILY TIME:** As a family, adopt a lifestyle that includes regular physical activity. For example, walk to school or after dinner or play games that incorporate movement.
- **ENCOURAGE:** Provide an opportunity for your child to experience a variety of activities. Let him/her choose what he/she likes to do best.
- **ENJOY:** Activity should be enjoyable; kids may resist it if it feels like punishment. Children 6 years and older should actively play 60 minutes per day.



[FuelUpToPlay60.com](http://FuelUpToPlay60.com)