

# Tips to Help Children Maintain a Healthy Weight

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In the United States, the number of children with obesity has continued to rise over the past two decades. Obesity in childhood poses immediate and future health risks.

Parents, guardians, and teachers can help children maintain a healthy weight by helping them develop healthy eating habits and limiting calorie-rich temptations. You also want to help children be physically active, have reduced screen time, and get adequate sleep.

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 the consultation of a health care provider.

## Develop healthy eating habits



To help children develop healthy eating habits:

- Provide plenty of vegetables, fruits, and whole-grain products.
- Include low-fat or non-fat milk or dairy products, including cheese and yogurt.

- Choose lean meats, poultry, fish, lentils, and beans for protein.
- Encourage your family to drink lots of water.
- Limit sugary drinks.
- Limit consumption of sugar and saturated fat.

Remember that small changes every day can lead to success!

For more information about nutrition, visit [Choose My Plate for children](#) and the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) .

## Limit calorie-rich temptations



Reducing the availability of high-fat and high-sugar or salty snacks can help your children develop healthy eating habits. Only allow your children to eat these foods rarely, so that they truly will be treats! Here are examples of easy-to-prepare, low-fat and low-sugar snacks that are 100 calories or less:

- 1 cup carrots, broccoli, or bell peppers with 2 tablespoons hummus.
- A medium apple or banana.
- 1 cup blueberries or grapes.
- One-fourth cup of tuna wrapped in a lettuce leaf.
- A few homemade oven-baked kale chips.

## Help children stay active



In addition to being fun for children, regular physical activity has many health benefits, including:

- Strengthening bones.
- Decreasing blood pressure.
- Reducing stress and anxiety.
- Increasing self-esteem.
- Helping with weight management.

Children ages 3 through 5 years should be active throughout the day. Children and adolescents ages 6 through 17 years should be physically active at least 60 minutes each day. Include aerobic activity, which is anything that makes their hearts beat faster. Also include bone-strengthening activities such as running or jumping and muscle-strengthening activities such as climbing or push-ups..

Remember that children imitate adults. Start adding physical activity to your own routine and encourage your child to join you.

## Reduce sedentary time

Although quiet time for reading and homework is fine, limit the time children watch television, play video games, or surf the web to no more than 2 hours per day. Additionally, the American Academy of Pediatrics does not recommend television viewing for children aged 2 years or younger. Instead, encourage

children to find fun activities to do with family members or on their own that simply involve more activity.

## Ensure adequate sleep

Too little sleep is associated with obesity, partly because inadequate sleep makes us eat more and be less physically active. Children need more sleep than adults, and the amount varies by age. See the recommended [amounts of sleep](#) and suggested habits to improve sleep.

### **[BAM! Body and Mind](#)**

Classroom resources for teachers of grades 4 through 8 to help students make healthier lifestyle choices.

### **[Best Bones Forever!](#)**[external icon](#)

Children learn why calcium, vitamin D, and bone-strengthening activity are essential.

### **[Blast Off Game](#)** [external icon](#)

Children learn what it takes to blast off in the food pyramid space shuttle!

### **[Child and Teen BMI \(Body Mass Index\) Calculator](#)**

For children, BMI screens for obesity, but it is not a diagnostic tool. See more about BMI for [children and teens](#).

### **[Childhood Overweight and Obesity](#)**

How obesity is defined for children, prevalence, associated factors, and related health consequences.

### **[How to Avoid Portion Size Pitfalls](#)**

Confused about portion sizes? Play the CDC's portion control game!

### **[My Plate Kids Place](#)**[external icon](#)

Includes games, activity sheets, videos, and songs.

### **[Physical Activity for Everyone](#)**

Physical activity recommendations by age.

### **[We Can!](#)**[external icon](#)

National education program designed for adults to help children aged 8 to 13 years old stay at a healthy weight.

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