

Helping Your Overweight Child

WIN *Weight-control Information Network*

HEALTHY eating and physical activity habits are key to your child's well-being. Eating too much and exercising too little can lead to overweight and related health problems that can follow children into their adult years. You can take an active role in helping your child—and your whole family—learn healthy eating and physical activity habits that can last for a lifetime.



Is my child overweight?

Because children grow at different rates at different times, it is not always easy to tell if a child is overweight. If you think that your child is overweight, talk to your health care provider. He or she can measure your child's height and weight and tell you if your child is in a healthy range.

How can I help my overweight child?

Involve the whole family in building healthy eating and physical activity habits. It benefits everyone and does not single out the child who is overweight.

Do not put your child on a weight-loss diet unless your health care provider tells you to. If children do not eat enough, they may not grow and learn as well as they should.

Be supportive

- Tell your child that he or she is loved, is special, and is important. Children's feelings about themselves often are based on their parents' feelings about them.
- Accept your child at any weight. Children will be more likely to accept and feel good about themselves when their parents accept them.
- Listen to your child's concerns about his or her weight. Overweight children probably know better than anyone else that they have a weight problem. They need support, understanding, and encouragement from parents.

Encourage healthy eating habits

- Buy and serve more fruits and vegetables (fresh, frozen, or canned). Let your child choose them at the store.
- Buy fewer soft drinks and high fat/high calorie snack foods like chips, cookies, and candy. These snacks are OK once in a while, but keep healthy snack foods on hand too and offer them to your child more often.



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