

# PREVENTING CHILDHOOD OBESITY

## Self-Help Materials



Nutrition

Exercise

Parenting

Behavior  
Modification

# Preventing Childhood Obesity

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## Nutrition

### Phase 1

**Make Healthy Beverage Choices.** The healthiest beverage choices for children are water, low-fat or skim milk, non-carbonated, and beverages with no added sugar.

However:

- If sodas are given to your child, it is better to serve them diet sodas.
- Whole milk should be served to children until the age of 2.
- Children between the ages of 1-6 should not exceed 4-6 oz of fruit juice per day
- Children between the ages of 7-18 should not exceed 8-12 oz of fruit juice per day.

Overall the healthiest and recommended daily choice for beverage consumption is:

- To serve one glass of 100-percent fruit juices or milk with meals, and water or flavored water for thirst quenching needs and with healthy snacks.

**Limit fast-food consumption to one time or less per week.**

- Choose plain hamburger kid's meal with water, diet soda or skim milk.
- Try a grilled chicken sandwich ordered without mayonnaise with a piece of fruit from home.
- Try a 6-inch, low-fat submarine sandwich (ordered without mayonnaise, cheese or oils), with baked chips or pretzels.
- Avoid burgers with double meat, cheese, bacon, mayonnaise and super-sized French fries.



**Choose three meals with one snack per day.**

- Great breakfast ideas: two pieces whole wheat toast with a glass of skim milk; small bowl of cereal such as bran flakes; old-fashioned oatmeal with skim milk; fat-free yogurt and a piece of fresh fruit.
- Great snacks include fresh fruit, fat-free yogurt or low-fat popcorn. Limit snacks to 1 serving size.
- Try the Plate Method at dinner. Design a dinner plate with 1/2 plate of vegetables, 1/4 plate of lean meat and 1/4 plate of starch or starchy vegetables (potatoes, corn and peas). Avoid second helpings.

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## Nutrition

### Phase 2

**Eat a variety of foods.** Eat fruits, vegetables; whole grain breads, cereals, rice and pastas; low-fat and fat-free dairy products; lean chicken, turkey, fish and legumes; and healthy fats. Use a small amount of added fats and sugars. Avoid fried foods. (See the Low-Fat, Low-Sugar Eating Guidelines chart for a list of food choices and sample menus.)

**Eat proper portion sizes.** Young children and inactive girls should choose the lower number of servings from each food group. Most active school-aged children and teen girls, as well as inactive teen boys should choose the middle number of servings. Active teen boys and some very active teen girls should choose the higher number of servings from each food group.

Bread, cereal, rice, pasta, and starchy vegetable group: Choose 6 – 11 servings per day	1 slice whole wheat bread 1/2 cup cooked whole grain cereal, brown rice or whole wheat pasta 1/2 cup starchy vegetables (corn, peas or potato) 1 oz whole grain cereal
Fruit Group: 2 – 4 servings per day	1 small piece fruit or 1/2 banana 1 cup fresh fruit such as melon or berries 1/2 cup canned fruit 4 ounces juice 2 Tbsp dried fruit
Vegetable group: 3 – 5 servings per day	1/2 cup cooked vegetables or vegetable juice 1 cup raw vegetables
Milk, yogurt, and cheese group: 2 – 4 servings per day	1 cup skim or 1% milk 1 cup fat-free or low-fat yogurt 1 oz fat-free or reduced-fat cheese
Meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs, and nuts group: 2 – 3 servings per day	2-3 oz skinless chicken, turkey or fish 1/2 cup beans or tofu 1/4 cup nuts or 2 Tbsp nut butter 1/2 cup egg whites or egg substitute
Fats, oils, and sweets group: Use a small amount	1 tsp butter, margarine, mayonnaise, oil or sugar 1 Tbsp salad dressing

**Stock your house with healthful food choices.** Eliminate unhealthful food choices from your house including low-fat cookies, cakes and ice cream as these foods are often enriched with sugar. Instead, stock your house with fresh fruit, cut up vegetables and fat-free or low-fat yogurt. Children can choose between an apple or yogurt for a snack, not an apple or potato chips.

**Limit restaurant eating to 1 time per week.** Restaurants provide large food portions. Split entrees or plan to take half home. If time is an issue, choose low-fat frozen dinners with bagged salad and/or a side of frozen vegetables.

**Take your lunch to school.** Pack a lunch with 2 ounces of lean meat or 1 ounce low-fat or fat-free cheese on whole grain bread with one serving of fruit, vegetables and fat-free milk or yogurt. Avoid eating breakfast at school. Instead, choose a bowl of whole grain cereal at home.

## Exercise

### Phase 1

**Begin decreasing time spent in sedentary activities.** Identify how many hours per day your family spends in sedentary activities such as watching TV, playing video games, and surfing the Internet and make efforts to decrease this time every day during the week. Explore ways to be physically active on a daily basis.

## Exercise

### Phase 2

**Decrease sedentary time.**

Limit television, video games and computer time to no more than 2 hours per day. Limiting sedentary time will encourage children to choose other activities, most of which will generate increased physical activity. Buy active toys rather than computer games or videotapes. Define indoor areas for physical play such as "Nerf" balls, bouncy balls or scooter toys.

**Incorporate physical activity into daily routines.**

Walk or ride bike to school. Play outdoors, in the gym or on the playground for 30 minutes before homework every day.

Walk with friends instead of talking to them on the telephone. If you have a dog, take it for a daily walk.



**Accumulate 1 hour of physical activity during the day.** Both children and adults should be active for 1 hour every day. This activity can be accumulated throughout the day. Consider purchasing a pedometer (\$10 - \$15) and join the 10,000 steps a day program.

**Be physically active as a family.** Plan family activities for the weekend such as bike riding, hiking; trips to the zoo, museum or library; and house or yard projects. Take family walks.

**Consider participating in organized sports or physical activities.** Get involved in team sports or marching band at school. Take classes in activities that you enjoy such as dance, martial arts, swimming or tennis; or buy an aerobics tape and exercise at home.

## Behavior Modification



**Eat meals as a family at the same place without distractions such as the TV.**

The family table encourages discussion, problem solving and interaction which diverts attention from eating thereby slowing the process and allowing for satiety to develop more naturally. Prepare plates in the kitchen rather than allow self serve.

**Eat slowly.** It takes 20 minutes for your brain to receive signals that your stomach is full. Eating too fast usually results in eating too much. Put your fork down between bites.

**Keep a health journal.** Keep a record of foods eaten, types and amounts of drinks and associated activities at the time of eating to increase awareness of food intake and the circumstances which promote eating. For example, if boredom after school leads to

overeating, make plans to stick to healthy behaviors during these times (i.e. start an after school activity). Consider keeping an exercise log to keep track of physical activity. Try to be active for 1 hour every day.

**Set realistic goals.** Realistic weight loss goals for children can be to maintain weight while they grow or to promote 1/2 - 2 pounds per week weight loss if medically necessary. Ask friends and family to support you in your new lifestyle.

**Reinforce positive changes in eating and activity.** Find reasons to praise your child for positive changes in eating and activity. In addition, parents can ask for "rewards" from their children for positive changes in their own eating activity behavior. Never shame your child about eating, activity or weight. Help your child to replace negative thinking ("I can't") with positive thinking ("I can do this").

## Tips For Parents

**Be a good role model.** Children learn by example. Eat a variety of healthful foods and be physically active every day so that your children will learn healthful habits.

**Offer structured meals and snacks.** Most children need food every 4 – 5 hours. Three meals and one snack time is appropriate for most school-aged children. Discourage between meal "grazing." Plan meals and snacks ahead of time.

**Disband the "clean plate" club.** Children are born with an innate sense of when they have had enough to eat. Encouraging them to eat past the point of fullness will result in weight gain.

**Never use food as a reward or punishment.** Food is for nourishing and fueling bodies. Instead, use non-food rewards such as special time spent together.

**Remember the rules.** Parents should be responsible for offering healthy foods and structured meals and snacks. Children should decide how much they eat. Be consistent.





## Low-Fat, Low-Sugar Eating Guidelines

Food Group	Food to Choose More Often	Foods to Limit
Breads, cereals, starches and starchy vegetables	Barley, bulgur, buckwheat (kasha); whole grain breads, bagels, English muffins, hamburger buns, rolls, tortillas, crackers, cereals, pancakes, and waffles; brown rice, whole wheat pasta, whole wheat couscous, unflavored oatmeal, winter squash, sweet potatoes, corn, corn tortillas	Biscuits; store brought muffins, croissants, sweet rolls, Danish, and donuts; sugar coated cereals, crackers made with saturated fats; pasta and rice dishes prepared in a butter cream sauce; baked, fried, mashed or scalloped potatoes
Vegetables	Any fresh or frozen vegetable such as artichoke and artichoke hearts, asparagus, beans (green, wax, Italian), bean sprouts, beets, broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, cucumber, eggplant, green onions, greens (collard, kale, mustard, turnip), mushrooms, okra, onions, pea pods, peppers, radishes, salad greens (endive, escarole, lettuce, romaine, spinach), sauerkraut, spinach, summer squash, tomatoes and tomato sauce, vegetable juices, water chestnuts, watercress, zucchini	Any vegetables prepared in butter, cream, or cheese sauce; fried vegetables
Fruits	Whole fresh and frozen fruits such as apple, banana, blueberries, cantaloupe, cherries, grapefruit, grapes, honeydew melon, kiwi, mango, orange, peach, pear, pineapple, plums, and strawberries or unsweetened canned fruits	Sweetened canned fruits and fruit juices, dried fruit and fried fruits



## Low-Fat, Low-Sugar Eating Guidelines

<b>Food Group</b>	<b>Food to Choose More Often</b>	<b>Foods to Limit</b>
Meat, poultry, fish, eggs, dried beans,	Fish, shellfish, skinned white-meat chicken and turkey, beans, peas, lentils, egg substitutes, egg whites, soybeans, and tofu	Regular beef, pork, lamb, veal, luncheon meats; fried chicken and fish, eggs, sausage, hot dogs
Milk, yogurt and cheese	Skim and 1 percent milk, plain nonfat yogurt, nonfat yogurt sweetened with aspartame or nonnutritive sweetener; fat-free or low-fat cheese and cottage cheese	2 percent and whole milk, 1 percent and whole chocolate milk, goat's milk, kefir, low-fat yogurt (plain or fruit flavored), custard-style yogurt, regular cheese and cottage cheese
Fats	Almonds, avocado, canola oil; fat-free or reduced-fat margarine, mayonnaise and salad dressings; olives, olive oil, peanut butter, peanuts, sunflower seeds, walnuts	Bacon, butter, chitterlings, coconut; cream (half and half, whipped cream), cream cheese, saturated fats such as coconut, palm and palm kernel oils; shortening or lard, sour cream
Sweets	Sugar substitutes such as Equal, Sweet 'n Low, or Splenda; light or sugar-free syrups, light or low-sugar jams and jellies; sugar-free gelatin; sugar-free Popsicles	Candy, sugar, syrup, honey, jam, jelly, gelatin, Popsicles and fruit juice bars, fruit snacks and fruit leathers
Beverages	Water, diet sodas, sugar-free drink mixes, sugar-free flavored water, unsweetened iced tea, coffee	Regular sodas, fruit juices, sports drinks, drink mixes, sweet tea, and flavored coffee beverages
Miscellaneous	Catsup, mustard, pickles, salsa, spices, lemon juice	
Snacks (in very limited amounts)	Low-fat popcorn, pretzels, baked or low-fat chips, rice cakes, graham crackers, granola bars, fat-free and low-fat frozen yogurt, fat-free fudge bars, homemade fruit smoothies	Chips, buttered popcorn; store bought cakes, cookies and pies; chocolate, sherbet, ice cream, pudding



## Low-Fat, Low-Sugar Eating Guidelines

<b>Sample Menu</b> All meals are prepared without added fat.		
<b>Breakfast</b> 2 slices whole-grain bread or frozen waffles 2 teaspoons almond butter 1 cup skim milk or yogurt 1 small banana	<b>Breakfast</b> Breakfast taco (small whole-wheat flour tortilla, 1/2 cup egg substitute, 1 ounce reduced-fat cheese, 2 tablespoons salsa) 1 small orange	<b>Breakfast</b> 1 cup old-fashioned oatmeal 1 cup skim milk 1 small pear
<b>Lunch</b> Turkey sandwich (2 ounces turkey breast on a whole-grain bread or roll) 1 cup green grapes 1 cup baby carrots, jicama and bell pepper strips 2 tablespoons fat-free ranch dressing 1 cup skim milk or fat-free, reduced-calorie yogurt Bottled water or diet soda	<b>Lunch</b> 2 ounces water-packed tuna mixed with 1 tablespoon light mayonnaise, chopped celery 10 whole grain crackers 1 small apple 1 cup skim milk or fat-free, reduced-calorie yogurt Water or diet soda	<b>Lunch</b> Peanut butter sandwich on whole wheat bread Apple 1 cup carrot and celery sticks 2 tablespoons light ranch dressing 1 cup skim milk or fat-free, reduced-calorie yogurt Water or diet soda
<b>Dinner</b> 3 -4 ounces grilled salmon 2/3 cup steamed/boiled brown rice 2 cups mixed salad greens 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar with 2 teaspoons Olive oil 1/2 cup steamed green beans Water with lemon	<b>Dinner</b> 1 cup vegetable soup (carrots, celery, onions, tomato) 2-3 ounces grilled chicken breast (skinless) 1/2 cup black beans 1/2 cup steamed/boiled brown rice 2 corn tortillas 1 cup lettuce and tomato salad with 1/8 avocado slice Water or unsweetened iced tea	<b>Dinner</b> 3 -4 ounces baked barbeque chicken breast (skinless) 1/2 cup mashed sweet potato 1/2 cup steamed cabbage 1/2 cup steamed turnip greens 1 small whole grain roll with 1 tablespoon light margarine Water or unsweetened iced tea
<b>Snack</b> Fruit smoothie (1 cup skim milk, 1 cup frozen fruit such as peaches or mixed berries) 3 cups low-fat popcorn 1 ounce peanuts	<b>Snack</b> 1/2 mango 1 cup fat-free, reduced-calorie yogurt with 1 ounce almond slivers	<b>Snack</b> 6 cups low-fat popcorn Diet soda or sugar-free Kool-Aid