

a healthy weight

for your child





You may have read in the newspaper or seen stories on TV about the problem of childhood overweight and obesity. Unhealthy eating habits, larger portion sizes, and not getting enough exercise are all linked to this problem.

Children who are very overweight are more likely to have health problems such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and bone and joint problems as they get older. Many overweight children feel bad about themselves (have low self-esteem) and are bullied or teased. The good news is that as a parent, you can teach your children and your whole family healthy habits that will last a lifetime. Everyone needs the right balance of healthy foods and active living to reach a healthy weight and prevent health problems.

Are you concerned that your child is at an unhealthy weight?

Yes No Not sure

The best way to know if your child is at a healthy weight is to check with your child's physician. At each visit, the physician will use a tool called body mass index (BMI) to find out if your child's weight is in a healthy range for his or her age, height, and gender.

The BMI number is plotted onto a growth chart that compares your child's BMI with boys or girls of the same age. While children come in all sizes and shapes, children whose BMI is near the higher end of the growth chart (85th percentile and above) may face health problems from their weight, now and in the future.

At your child's next office visit, ask the physician to show you your child's BMI percentile. Write it below:

_____ percentile _____
(date)

If your child is at the highest end of the growth chart for BMI, the physician may advise changes to eating and activity habits to help your child stay at that weight as he or she grows taller. If your child is having health problems because of weight, the physician may advise that your child slowly lose weight (1 to 2 pounds a month).

Are You Ready to Change Your Family's Habits?

On a scale of 0 to 10, how ready are you to change eating and activity habits to help your whole family be a healthier weight?



0 to 3:
Not ready

4 to 6:
Unsure

7 to 10:
I am ready!

Not ready (score 0 to 3)

What needs to happen to make you more ready in the future?

Even if you don't feel ready right now, keep reading this booklet so you can learn more about a healthy lifestyle for your family.

Unsure (score 4 to 6)

Think about whether making changes to your family's eating habits and activity is important to you by answering these questions:

What are the advantages of making changes?

What are some of the drawbacks?

What might happen if you do not make any changes?

I am ready (score 7 to 10)

Congratulations! You are ready to take action. This booklet will help you start taking steps toward new healthy habits for your whole family.



Four Steps to New Healthy Habits

Step 1: Set a goal to be healthier as a family.

Set a goal for the whole family to make healthier food choices and add more physical activity. No matter what your children's shapes or sizes, let them know that you love them and want the whole family to be healthier. Keep the focus on health, not weight and weight loss. Help all family members avoid comments or teasing about body size or shape.

Children learn best by example, so practice good eating habits along with them and stay active as a family. Be a good role model and don't criticize your own body. Follow the eating and activity habits that you want your child to have. (Keep reading for tips to get active and eat healthier.)

What is the first step you will take as a family to be healthier?

Step 2: Get more active.

Find ways to help your children be more active. Children should aim for 60 minutes or more of active play each day. Adults should aim for at least 30 minutes of activity a day. Physical activity burns calories, which helps control weight and keeps bones and muscles strong.

Check off the activity tips you will use to get started. Add some of your own ideas at the end of the list.

Tips to get active:

- ❑ Go for walks or bike rides with the whole family.
- ❑ Encourage children to do an after-school sport.
- ❑ Check with local schools and recreation centers for free or low-cost dance classes.
- ❑ Take your kids to the park to walk, play basketball or soccer, jog, skate, or play catch.
- ❑ Plant and care for a vegetable garden.
- ❑ Explore zoos, museums, street fairs, and farmer's markets.
- ❑ Dance or do chores together to music.

What are other ways you and your family will be more active?



Step 3: Eat and drink healthier.

Your job as a parent is to offer healthy foods in reasonable portions at regular meal and snack times. Having healthy food choices available at planned times will help children learn to eat slowly and stop eating when they are full.

As the parent, you decide what, where, and when to eat. Your child's job is to choose how much of the healthy foods you serve to eat.

Check off the healthy eating tips you will use to get started. Add some of your own ideas at the end of the list.

Tips to eat and drink healthier:

- Encourage children to eat 5 to 9 servings of fruits and vegetables a day. (One piece of fruit or 1/2 cup of vegetables = 1 serving.)
- Drink water when thirsty. Add a slice of lime, lemon, or cucumber or a splash of unsweetened fruit juice for flavor.
- Make sure children have nonfat or low-fat milk or yogurt each day.
 - 2 cups a day for kids 8 years old and younger
 - 3 cups a day for 9- to 18-year-olds
- Limit 100-percent fruit juice to one small cup a day. Eating the whole fruit is healthier and more filling than drinking fruit juice.
- Drink less sugar. Cut down on sodas, punch, juice drinks, sports drinks, and smoothies.
- Let children help prepare meals. Young children can help set the table; older children can help chop vegetables or toss a salad. Nothing makes a child prouder than saying, "I made that!"
- Offer healthy choices. Ask, "Which would you like with dinner: broccoli or green beans?"

POP QUIZ:

If you ate 1 cup of green beans with dinner, how many servings did you eat?
____ servings

Answer: 2

- ❑ Fuel up with breakfast every day. Serve a variety of:
 - Whole-grain, low-sugar cereals or oatmeal (less than 5 grams of added sugar per serving)
 - Whole-wheat breads
 - Protein foods such as hard-boiled eggs, string cheese, low-fat yogurt, or nonfat milk
 - Fruit

- ❑ Eat as many meals at home as a family as you can. Focus on each other at mealtime. Take the time to share, laugh, and talk about your day. Try to keep meals stress free.

- ❑ Offer the same foods for the whole family. Make kid-friendly foods for everyone, and then separately add herbs, spices, and flavors to please the adults in the family.

- ❑ When you do eat out, pick healthier options, such as a grilled chicken sandwich, small hamburger (skip the cheese), and fruit and vegetable side orders most of the time. Do not ask your



children to “clean their plate.” Kids’ meals at many restaurants serve more food than one child needs at one meal. Ask for a box for leftovers.

- ❑ Make fast food, chips, candy, churros, cookies, and pastries a “sometimes” treat, but not part of your children’s daily diet.
- ❑ If healthy lunches and snacks are not served at your children’s school or daycare, pack healthy foods for them. Let your children pick some of the foods for their lunch, and they will be more likely to eat them.

What else can you can do as a family to eat healthier?

Step 4: Turn it off.

Many children spend too much time watching TV, playing video games, or surfing the Internet, often snacking at the same time.

Here are a few tips to “turn it off.”

- Limit TV, video games, and computer use to less than 2 hours a day for the whole family.
- Turn the TV off during meals and snacks. It’s easier to overeat when you are watching TV.

What are some fun things you can do as a family other than watching TV or using the computer?

Healthy Living Programs and More Resources

If you and your family want support to make healthy changes, we can help. Ask your child's physician or local Kaiser Permanente Health Education Department for information on resources for healthy living programs in your area.

Websites

Kaiser Permanente Children's Health

Information on physical activity, positive parenting, and more
kp.org/children

Fruits & Veggies—More Matters

Recipes and nutrition information for fruits and vegetables
fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org





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