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## Tips for Parents – Ideas to Help Children Maintain a Healthy Weight

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To help your child maintain a healthy weight, balance the calories your child consumes from foods and beverages with the calories your child uses through physical activity and normal growth.

Remember that the goal for overweight and obese children and teens is to reduce the rate of weight gain while allowing normal growth and development. Children and teens should NOT be placed on a weight reduction diet without the consultation of a health care provider.

### Balancing Calories: Help Kids Develop Healthy Eating Habits

One part of balancing calories is to eat foods that provide adequate nutrition and an appropriate number of calories. You can help children learn to be aware of what they eat by developing healthy eating habits, looking for ways to make favorite dishes healthier, and reducing calorie-rich temptations.

#### **Encourage healthy eating habits.**

There's no great secret to healthy eating. To help your children and family develop healthy eating habits:

- Provide plenty of vegetables, fruits, and whole-grain products.
- Include low-fat or non-fat milk or dairy products.
- Choose lean meats, poultry, fish, lentils, and beans for protein.
- Serve reasonably-sized portions.
- Encourage your family to drink lots of water.
- Limit sugar-sweetened beverages.
- Limit consumption of sugar and saturated fat.

Remember that small changes every day can lead to a recipe for success!

For more information about nutrition, visit [Finding Your Way to a Healthier You: Based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#).(PDF-255K)

#### **Look for ways to make favorite dishes healthier.**

The recipes that you may prepare regularly, and that your family enjoys, with just a few changes can be healthier and just as satisfying. For new ideas about how to add more fruits and vegetables to your daily diet check out the recipe database from the [FruitsandVeggiesMatter.gov](#). This database enables you to find tasty fruit and vegetable recipes that fit your needs.

### **Remove calorie-rich temptations!**

Although everything can be enjoyed in moderation, reducing the calorie-rich temptations of high-fat and high-sugar, or salty snacks can also help your children develop healthy eating habits. Instead only allow your children to eat them sometimes, so that they truly will be treats! Here are examples of easy-to-prepare, low-fat and low-sugar treats that are 100 calories or less:

- A medium-size apple
- A medium-size banana
- 1 cup blueberries
- 1 cup grapes
- 1 cup carrots, broccoli, or bell peppers with 2 tbsp. hummus

## **Balancing Calories: Help Kids Stay Active**

Another part of balancing calories is to engage in an appropriate amount of physical activity and avoid too much sedentary time. In addition to being fun for children and teens, regular physical activity has many health benefits, including:

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

### **Help kids stay active.**

Children and teens should participate in at least 60 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity most days of the week, preferably daily.<sup>11</sup> Remember that children imitate adults. Start adding physical activity to your own daily routine and encourage your child to join you.

Some examples of moderate intensity physical activity include:

- Brisk walking
- Playing tag
- Jumping rope
- Playing soccer
- Swimming
- Dancing

### **Reduce sedentary time.**

In addition to encouraging physical activity, help children avoid too much sedentary time. Although quiet time for reading and homework is fine, limit the time your children watch television, play video games, or surf the web to no more than 2 hours per day. Additionally, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) does not recommend television viewing for children age 2 or younger.<sup>12</sup> Instead, encourage your children to find fun activities to do with family members or on their own that simply involve more activity.

**Source:** <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/children/index.html#prevention>