

Raising Healthy Kids



Nutrition makes a big difference in how children grow, develop and learn. Research shows that children are more willing to eat healthy foods and be active if they see their parents and family members doing those things first.

The Facts:

- The incidence of childhood obesity has doubled in the past two decades in the U.S. Currently, about 15% of children are overweight and measure at or above the 95th percentile for BMI (body mass index) on standard growth charts. (see right →)
- Overweight children are much more likely to end up obese when they're adults. Adult obesity is a risk factor for heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke and some forms of cancer.
- American children are now less physically active than previous generations and less active children are more likely to be overweight.
- More than 25% of children in the U.S. watch four or more hours of TV per day, with an average of 23 to 24 hours per week.

To learn more about nutrition programs offered at UCSF Medical Center, contact:

- The Nutrition Counseling Center at 415-353-2291.

Growth and BMI

Your child's pediatrician should be monitoring weight and height at every clinic visit. BMI is based on weight and height. It is the primary measurement for screening for overweight and for underweight. You can get your child's growth chart from your pediatrician or get a blank copy online at www.cdc.org.

| BMI for Children Two Years or Older | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Overweight | BMI for age >95 th % |
| At risk for overweight | BMI for age 85-95 th % |
| Normal weight | BMI for age 10-85 th % |
| Underweight | BMI for age <10 th % |

Good Nutrition is a Matter of Balance

- Provide foods from several food groups at every meal. Be flexible and substitute different foods within the same food group to increase variety.
- Respect your child's likes and dislikes and set a positive example in your own food choices. Prepare healthy meals that the whole family eats.
- Share the responsibility for making food decisions with your child. Parents are the best judges of *what* children should eat. Children are the best judges of *which* healthy foods to eat and *how much* to eat.
- Family meals are very important. Eating together helps promote healthy eating habits for the whole family.
- Schedule meals at regular intervals and don't skip meals. Lack of a meal schedule can lead to increased snacking on high fat foods.
- Eating breakfast is important as it provides fuel to keep your child alert in school.
- Don't worry about how much your child eats at a single meal or even in a day. Over a week, the choices usually even out and provide a balanced diet.
- Don't force kids to finish everything on their plates.
- Try not to use food as a reward, comfort or punishment.

Healthy Hints for Healthy Kids



Diet

- Many health organizations including The National Cholesterol Education Program recommend low-fat eating for everyone over the age of two. This means that we all need to choose foods with the lowest amount of fat in them and to be careful not to add more fat during cooking and at the table. Parents should provide low-fat meals and snacks but make sure kids still get enough calories to grow.
- Increase intake of fruits and vegetables to a goal of 5 to 9 servings each day.
Example serving sizes are ½ cup cooked vegetables or fruit or 1 small apple, banana or orange.
- To limit foods that are high in fat--
 - Choose lean meats, trim visible fat from meats and skin from poultry before eating.
 - Use lower fat cooking methods like baking, broiling, roasting, stewing and steaming.
 - Avoid frying foods, since this greatly raises the calorie and fat content.
 - Choose 1%, low-fat or non-fat dairy products.
 - Limit added fats from toppings like cheese, butter, margarine, mayonnaise, and salad dressing.
- Don't buy high fat snacks like potato chips and candy.
- Read food labels. Low-fat is 3 grams of fat, or less, per serving.
- Cut down on fast foods like French fries, burgers and fried chicken.
- Eat less added sugars like those found in table sugar, honey, sweets, pastries and desserts.
- Avoid high-calorie beverages like regular sodas, soft drinks, and sweetened juices.
- Limit 100% fruit juice to no more than 1 cup per day.
- Take time to plan healthier meals. Eat meals and snacks in the kitchen or dining room. Avoid eating in front of the TV or computer.



Activity

- Regular exercise builds muscle strength and can help reduce the risk of heart disease and obesity.
- Encourage 30-60 minutes of exercise at least four times per week.
- Encourage your child to do activities that he/she will be able to do for a lifetime. For example: biking, walking, skating, or swimming.
- Incorporate activity into your family's routine.
- Be a positive role model by exercising yourself.
- Limit TV viewing to one to two hours per day for all kids over two years of age. Don't allow your children to have TVs in their rooms.



Kid Friendly Healthy Snack Options:

- Plain popcorn
- Raw vegetables with low-fat dip or hummus
- Baked potato chips
- Whole grain crackers
- Cereal with low-fat milk
- Pretzels or rice cakes
- Whole grain bagel with light cream cheese
- Celery with reduced fat peanut butter
- Low-fat cheese with apple
- Low-fat yogurt or cottage cheese with fruit
- Vegetarian sushi
- Smoothies using fruits & low-fat yogurt
- Lean cold cuts in whole wheat tortilla
- Fresh fruit or raw vegetables
- Baked potato with non-fat sour cream or yogurt
- Baked tortilla chips with salsa
- Lettuce rolls using leaves wrapped around beans, low-fat cheese
- Whole wheat English muffin with tomato sauce and cheese
- Dried fruit with nuts
- Potato skins: bake potato, remove some of insides, add no-fat refried beans and low-fat cheese
- Whole wheat waffles/fruit
- Rice papers filled with vegetables/tofu
- Edamame

More Great Information:

- MyPyramid for great tips on planning meals and activities at www.mypyramid.gov
- American Academy of Pediatrics - www.aap.org
- American Dietetic Association - www.eatright.org
- Center for Disease Control - www.cdc.gov

Remember that healthy bodies come in all shapes and sizes.