

West Plano Pediatrics, P.A.

Parents Guide to Preventing Childhood Obesity

Teaching our children good eating habits is the key to preventing childhood obesity. Remember that our food preferences shape our children's preferences. Be a good role model by making healthful food choices at the supermarket, when preparing meals and when dining out.

Helpful hints

- “**2 fistfuls**” is about the size of a person's stomach. Use this as a guide to gauge portion sizes.
- The size of one's **palm** is about the size of the meat portion per meal.
- An extra **100 calories per day** every day will lead to a **10 pound** weight gain.
- When dining out, split entrees or plan to take half home. If time is an issue, choose low-fat frozen dinners with bagged salad/ side of frozen vegetables.
- Fat calories should be 30% or less of total calories. Take into consideration serving size/ portion on the label.
- Cook with canola oil or olive oil. Avoid polysaturated fats.

Nutrition Suggestions

Choose sugar-free beverages, low-fat milk or water only.

- Limit milk (skim, ½ and 1%) to 16-24 ounces per day.
- Avoid flavored milks, like chocolate and strawberry, including fat-free versions.

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

- Choose plain hamburger kids meal with water, skim milk or diet soda.
- Try a grilled chicken sandwich without mayonnaise with a piece of fruit.
- Try a 6 inch Subway sandwich without mayonnaise, oils or cheese. Add 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.

- Breakfast ideas: two pieces whole wheat toast with a glass of skim milk; small bowl of cereal- bran flakes, Cheerios, oatmeal with skim milk; fat free yogurt such as Dannon Light or Yoplait Light and a piece of fresh fruit.
- Snack ideas: fresh fruit, fat-free yogurt, low-fat popcorn, pretzels. Limit snacks to 1 serving size.

- Try the **Plate Method** at dinner. Vegetable should be ½ plate, lean meat ¼ plate, and starch or starchy vegetables (potatoes, corn and peas) ¼ plate. Avoid second helpings.

Eat a variety of foods.

Eat fruits, vegetable, whole grain breads, cereals, rice and pasta; low-fat and fat-free dairy products; lean chicken, turkey, fish and legume; and healthy fats. Use a small amount of added fats and sugars. Avoid fried foods.

Stock your house with healthful food choices.

Eliminate low-fat cookies, cakes and ice cream as these are often enriched with sugar. Stock your house with fresh fruit, cut up vegetables and fat-free or low-fat yogurt.

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/oatmeal at home.

Exercise Suggestions

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. Make efforts to decrease this time every day this week.

Decrease sedentary time.

Limit television, video games and computer time to no more than 1 hour per day. Limiting this will encourage children to choose other activities, 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 the bike to school. Play outdoors, in the gym or playground for 30 minutes before homework every day. Walk with friends instead of talking with them on the telephone. Walk the dog or jump rope.

Accumulate 1 hour of physical activity during the day.

Adults and children 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 TV.**

The family table encourages discussion, problem solving, and interaction which diverts attention from eating thereby slowing the process and allowing satiety to develop more naturally. Prepare plates in the kitchen rather than 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 food 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). Try to be active for 1 hour per day.

Set realistic goals.

Realistic weight loss goals for children can be to maintain weight while they grow or to promote ½ - 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 food and be physically active every day so that your children will learn healthful habits.

Offer structure 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. Children should decide how much they 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 (special time together)