



Six Simple Steps to a Healthy Weight for Kids

1. Be active by playing together inside and outside.

For a healthy weight, kids and adults need 30 to 60 minutes of daily physical activity. This can be walking, jogging, tennis, swimming, or organized sports. If you or your child enjoy video games, you can even play Dance-Dance-Revolution, Wii sports, or Wii fit. Finding an activity that you enjoy and that the family can do together will make it easier to continue this healthy habit.

2. Make family meals a special time to eat together.

Eating more meals together can make a big difference in your family's health, happiness, and finances. Dinners at home are easier (and cheaper) than you think!

Plan a weekly menu: Make it simple or make it detailed – the key is to have a plan. Involve the whole family; let each person have a night to pick their favorite dishes.

Cook once, eat twice: Cut down on prep time. Cook and freeze key ingredients, like ground beef for tacos and spaghetti sauce, or main dishes, like lasagna and casseroles.

Keep the cupboard stocked: Pack your pantry (and freezer) with staples like canned beans, tuna, and fruit; pasta, rice, and baking mixes; and frozen vegetables.

3. Eat most meals at home and eat fewer fast food meals.

Fast food can be loaded with calories, fat, and sugar. Whether you drive-thru or go inside, here are some smart tips to help you eat better in the fast food lane.

Share a super size: There's a way to make mega portions work for you: share them! By sharing a large order, you eat fewer calories, less fat, and save money too.

Rethink your drink: A 32-oz. soft drink has over 300 calories, almost 1/2-cup sugar, and no nutritional value. Switch to diet soda, water, or low-fat milk.

Choose nutrient-rich options: Many national chains now offer tasty, fun choices that are not high in fat and calories. Whenever possible, choose foods that are grilled and not fried. Also look for sides that include fresh vegetables or fruit instead of french fries.

4. Enjoy tasty fruit and veggie snacks together.

Serve a rainbow of produce every day – at least 5 juicy, crunchy, crispy, tasty fruits and vegetables. Fresh, frozen, dried, canned, and juice – they all count for 5 A Day!

Enjoy green fruits and veggies: For snacks or dinner, green comes in dozens of delicious flavors – like sliced kiwi fruit or broccoli trees with light Ranch dip.

Enjoy yellow-orange fruits and veggies: For morning, afternoon, or evening snacks, choose a fresh orange, canned pineapple, baby carrots, or yellow pepper slices.

Enjoy red fruits and veggies: Red is a tasty color for produce – any time of day! Try frozen berries, watermelon, or canned tomato sauce on pasta, pizza, or tacos.

5. Drink skim milk with meals and drink water with snacks.

Dairy products can help kids (and adults) maintain a healthy weight, build strong bodies, and lower blood pressure. Water is always refreshing – and calorie-free.

Serve low-fat milk with meals: The best way to get your kids to drink milk is to drink milk yourself with every meal. Aim for a total of 16 to 24 ounces per day.

Offer water at snack time: Everybody needs fluid to stay well hydrated, especially in warm weather. Water quenches your thirst – without adding extra calories or sugar.

Steer clear of sugary drinks: For beautiful teeth and strong bodies, wise parents limit soft drinks, fruit punch, fruit drinks, sweet tea, and other high-sugar drinks.

6. Take the TV out of the bedroom and read together.

Pediatricians recommend no TV for children under three years, no more than two hours of total screen time a day for older kids, and no TVs in children's rooms.

Improve your child's fitness level: Turning off the TV gives kids more time for active play – plus they miss all those commercials for candy, chips, and sugar cereals.

Improve your child's school performance: Children who have less screen time (TV, computers, and video games) tend to read more and do better in their classes.

Improve your child's sleeping habits: There are many benefits to taking the TV out of a child's bedroom: calmer bedtime routines, more bedtime stories, and better sleep.

If your child is 7 – 13 years old and you are interested in enrolling him/her in a healthy lifestyle education program, consider Project MEND, a program of the YMCA. Call 214-880-9622 for more information. You can also visit www.mendfoundation.org

For additional on-line resources, check out:

www.kidshealth.org - search for “healthy lifestyle”

www.healthychildren.org – search for “obesity”