



We Can! Parent Tips: Making Healthier Food Choices

As a parent, you want to give your family the best you can. Serving healthier foods in the appropriate portions per food group and calorie level is one of the best ways to ensure that your children are getting proper nutrition without eating too many calories. These simple tips can help you plan and prepare meals and snacks to help your family to get the most nutrition out of the calories consumed.

What is a “Healthy Diet”?

The U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans describes a **healthy eating plan** as one that:

- Emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products;
- Includes lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, and nuts;
- Is low in saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, salt (sodium), and added sugars; and
- Stays within your calorie needs.

We Can! has tips and tools to help you choose and prepare healthier foods for your family. Use these tips and tools to help your family eat nutritiously and help them maintain a healthy weight.

GO, SLOW, and WHOA Foods

Focus on Food Choices

GO foods are the lowest in fat and added sugar. They are also “nutrient dense” (which means they are better sources of vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients important to health) and relatively low in calories. Enjoy GO foods almost anytime. Examples of GO foods are: fruits (fresh, frozen, or canned in juice), vegetables (fresh, frozen without added fat, canned without added sodium), whole grains, fat-free or low-fat milk products, lean meat, poultry, fish beans, eggs whites or egg substitute.

SLOW foods are higher in fat, added sugar, and/or calories than GO foods. SLOW foods include: vegetables with added fat, white refined flour bread, low-fat mayonnaise, and 2% low fat milk. Have SLOW foods sometimes or less often.

WHOA foods are the highest in fat and/or added sugar. They are “calorie dense” (a small portion is relatively high in calories), and many are low in vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients as well. Have WHOA foods only once in a while or on special occasions. And, when you do have them, have small portions. Examples of WHOA foods are: whole milk, cheese, fried potatoes, croissants, muffins, butter, and creamy salad dressings.

To download a GO, SLOW, and WHOA Foods Chart, click on <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/downloads/gswtips.pdf>



Healthy Eating Choices

From WHOA to SLOW to GO. How you choose to prepare or order your food when eating out can quickly turn a less healthy food into a healthier option. Choosing baked, broiled, steamed, grilled, and microwaved foods saves you from extra fat and calories. See the example on how similar foods can go from a WHOA to a SLOW or to a GO food.

	WHOA (eat once in a while)	Calories	SLOW (eat sometimes or less often)	Calories	GO (eat almost anytime)	Calories
Fruit	Apple pie, 1/8 of 9-inch pie	296	Baked apple, 1 cup slices, with 1 Tbsp butter	193	Apple, 1 medium	72
Bread	½ plain bagel (3 ½ inch) with 1 Tbsp butter and jelly	249	½ plain bagel (3 ½ inch) with 1 Tbsp jelly	147	1/2 whole wheat bagel (3 ½ inch)	91
Meat	Fried chicken, 2 drumsticks	386	Roasted chicken breast with skin, ½ breast	193	Roasted chicken breast without skin, ½ breast	142

You can go from WHOA to GO by making these substitutions when cooking. Substituting the low-fat and fat-free versions of foods as alternatives to the full fat items can help reduce overall calories of favorite foods without affecting taste. Try using low-fat mozzarella cheese in lasagna instead of the full fat variety. Your family will likely not notice the difference. Substitute applesauce for butter in baking and still get a rich, moist product. Try some of the calorie-reducing substitutions below when you cook or bake.

Instead of:	Substitute:
1 cup cream	1 cup evaporated fat-free milk
1 cup butter, stick margarine, or shortening for baking	Tub margarine, vegetable oil, or ½ cup apple butter or applesauce without added sugar
1 egg	2 egg whites or ¼ cup egg substitute
Butter or stick margarine for sautéing	Cooking spray, low-sodium chicken broth, or a small amount of olive oil or vegetable oil

For more tips on making healthier substitutions, visit <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/live-it/cooking.htm>

Also, check out *heart healthy recipes* from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) at <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/index.htm#recipes>





Making healthier selections when dining out. There are several things you can do at restaurants to lower your intake of fat and calories. For example, order foods that are steamed, broiled, baked, roasted, poached, or lightly sautéed or stir-fried. You can also trim visible fat from poultry or meat. In addition, request:

- olive oil for dipping instead of butter or margarine
- fat-free or low-fat milk rather than whole milk or cream in coffee or in other drinks
- food without butter, gravy, or sauces
- salad dressing “on the side” and request light or fat-free dressing
- steamed vegetables or a fruit cup as a substitute for french fries
- “hold the cheese” or “cheese on the side” when ordering sandwiches or salads so you can decide how much cheese you want to eat.
- unsweetened beverages, such as water, unsweetened iced-tea, or sugar-free or diet iced-tea and lemonade.

Portion Distortion

Anyone who has eaten out lately is likely to notice how big the food portions are. It's hard to find “small” anymore --- “supersize” is more like it. Sometimes your plate arrives and there's enough food for two or even three people. These ever-large portions have changed what we think of as a “normal” portion, and that affects how much food we eat at home as well. Cutting back on portion size can help you and your family limit your calorie intake. Follow these simple tips to get started:

- Select an appetizer that is low in fat and includes a fruit or vegetable instead of an entrée at a restaurant.
- Put a smaller portion on a smaller plate; it won't look so skimpy.
- Share a portion with a family member or friend.
- Instead of giving your child or yourself an entire bottle of fruit juice or soda, pour a small amount (1/2 cup) into a cup. Better yet, choose water or small amounts of 100% fruit juice over soda.
- Use tall, narrow glasses instead of short, wide glasses. You will drink less.
- Order a medium pizza instead of a large. Everyone gets the same number of slices as before; they're just smaller.
- Before you eat your meal ask the wait staff to put half of the meal in a take home bag for leftovers to eat the next day.





Parent Tips: Making
Healthier Food Choices

Compare the size of foods from 20 years ago to today. Portions have grown and so have the calories!

20 Years Ago			Today		
	Portion	Calories		Portion	Calories
Bagel	3-inch	140	Bagel	6-inch	350
Fast food cheeseburger	1	333	Large fast food cheeseburger with sauces	1	590
Spaghetti and meatballs	1 cup spaghetti, 3 small meatballs	500	Spaghetti and meatballs	2 cups spaghetti, 3 large meatballs	1,020
Soda	6.5 ounces	85	Soda	20 ounces	250
Blueberry muffin	1.5 ounces	210	Blueberry muffin	5 ounces	500

To test your knowledge on serving sizes, check out the Portion Distortion activity on the **We Can!** Web site, <http://hp2010.nhlbihin.net/portion/index.htm>.

Visit the **We Can!** Web site, <http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov> or call 1-866-35-WECAN to order a free copy of the **We Can!** *Families Finding the Balance: Parent Handbook*.

We Can!, or “Ways to Enhance Children’s Activity & Nutrition,” is a national education program designed for families and communities to help children achieve a healthy weight. The program focuses on *three* important behaviors: *improved* food choices, *increased* physical activity and *reduced* screen time.

For more information about **We Can!** visit <http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov> or call 1-866-35-WECAN

