

Help Your Child Grow Up Healthy and Strong



**Department of Health
and Human Services**

**Department of
Agriculture**

**Department of
Education**



Body Mass Index: A Useful Tool

Body Mass Index, or BMI, is used to assess overweight and risk for overweight. Children's body fatness changes over the years as they grow, and boys and girls differ as they mature, so it is important to use a BMI measure specifically designed for children. Many schools have begun routine BMI measurement for students as one tool to help identify those at risk of obesity. If you are concerned about your child's weight, ask your pediatrician or school clinic about the BMI for children. For more information on BMI for children, see www.cdc.gov/nccd/php/dnpa/bmi.

Healthy Lifestyles: A Family Affair!

Give your children building blocks for a healthy lifestyle by teaching them the importance of good nutrition and regular physical activity. Eating well and being physically active every day are keys to your child's health and well-being. Eating too many high calorie foods and getting too little physical activity can lead to excessive weight gain and physical health problems, such as type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure, now being diagnosed in children. Obesity also is associated with an increased risk of other health problems such as depression.

You play an important role in helping your child, and the entire family, learn about healthy eating and regular physical activity. Parents have the power to set examples. Make healthy eating and daily physical activity fun, to help children learn good habits to last a lifetime. This brochure provides some tips on how you can promote healthy eating habits and encourage active lifestyles in your family.

Healthy Choices Start With You!

- Help your children develop healthy eating habits at an early age. Nutritious food is something to enjoy. It helps children grow strong and gives them energy.
- Set an example for active living by moving with your kids. Your kids pay attention to you, they really do!
- Teach your children that good health depends on the right balance between what they eat and how much they move.

*It's never too late!
Small steps make a big difference.*



Keys to a Healthy Diet

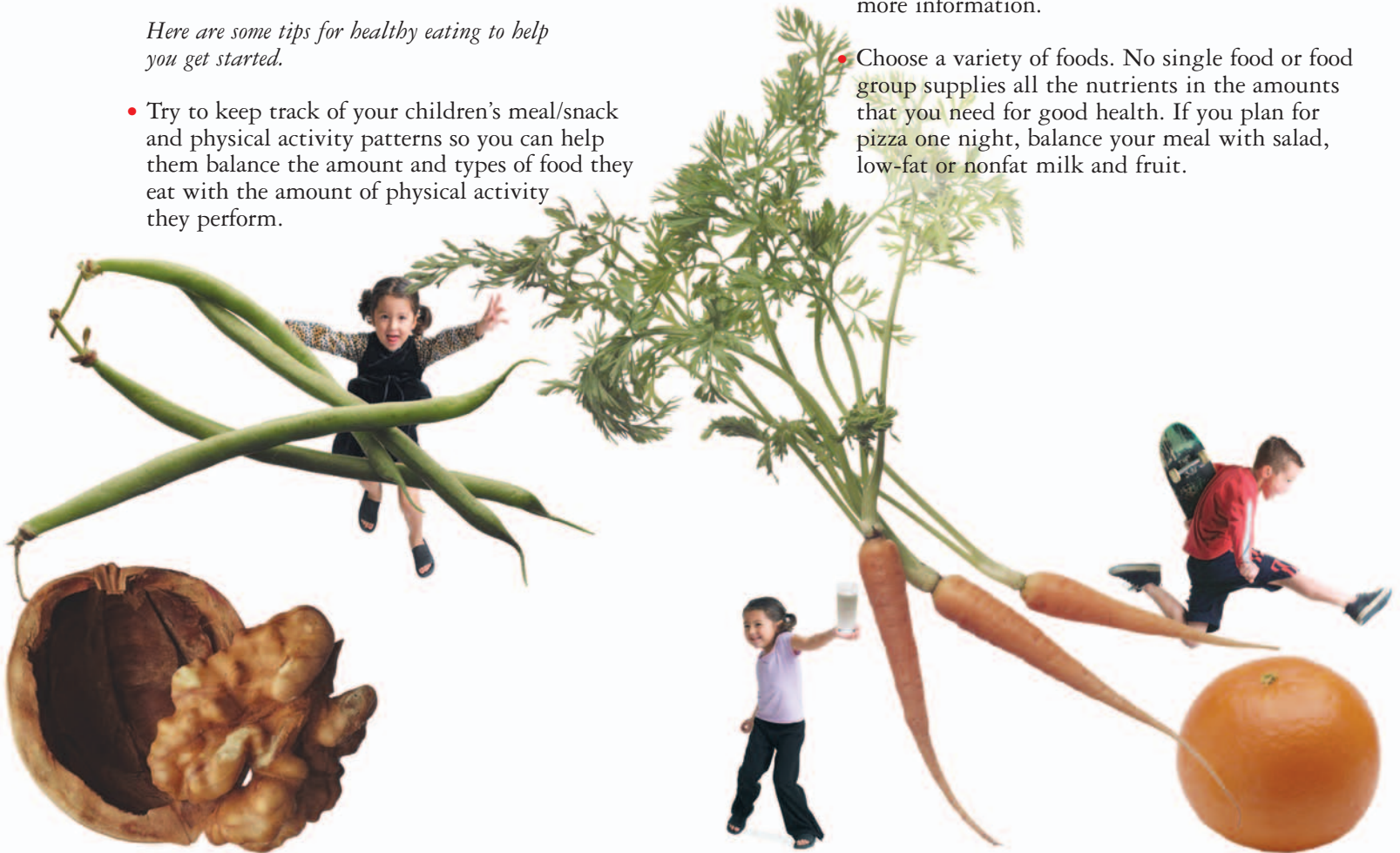
The keys to healthy eating are variety, balance and moderation. Be sure your family eats a variety of foods, including plenty of vegetables, fruits and whole grain products. Also include low-fat and nonfat dairy products, lean meats, poultry, fish and legumes (lentils and beans). Drink water to quench your thirst, and go easy on the salt, sugar and saturated fat.

Good nutrition should be part of an overall healthy lifestyle that also includes regular physical activity. To maintain weight, both kids and adults must balance the calories they eat with the calories they burn through physical activity. If you eat more calories than you use up in physical activity, you gain weight. If you eat fewer calories than you use up, you lose weight. Make a commitment to helping your family eat sensibly and move more often.

Here are some tips for healthy eating to help you get started.

- Try to keep track of your children's meal/snack and physical activity patterns so you can help them balance the amount and types of food they eat with the amount of physical activity they perform.

- Encourage your family to eat at least 5 servings of brightly colored vegetables and fruits a day. You can start the day with 100% fruit or vegetable juice. Slice fruit on top of cereal. Serve salad with lunch and an apple as an afternoon snack. Include vegetables with dinner.
- Leave the candy, soft drinks, chips and cookies at the store. Substitute them with fruits, vegetables, nuts, and low-fat or nonfat milk products. Your child will soon learn to make smart food choices outside your home as well.
- Serve children child-sized portions, and let your child ask for more if still hungry. Don't force children to clean their plates. Try measuring food items to learn to estimate the amount of food on a plate. See <http://www.niddk.nih.gov/health/nutrit/pubs/justenuff/justenough.htm> for more information.
- Choose a variety of foods. No single food or food group supplies all the nutrients in the amounts that you need for good health. If you plan for pizza one night, balance your meal with salad, low-fat or nonfat milk and fruit.



Eat Smart!

Sharing meals is an ideal way for the family to spend time together. Whether you're eating at home or eating out on the go, it's important to *eat smart*.

- Be consistent. Establish a family meal routine, and set times for breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks. Eat together whenever possible.
- Take charge of the foods your children eat. When you serve a meal, your child can choose to eat it or not; but don't offer to substitute an unhealthy alternative when your child refuses to eat what you've served.
- Restrict children's access to the refrigerator and snack cupboards.
- Turn off the TV during meals, and limit kids' snacking when watching TV.
- Serve a vegetable or fruit with every meal and at snack time.
- Reward your kids with praise and fun activities rather than with food.
- Involve your children in meal planning and food preparation. They are more likely to eat what they help to make.



- While shopping and cooking, teach your children about the food groups and the importance of a balanced diet. Throughout the day, choose the types and amounts of foods you need from the five food groups.
- Teach your children how to read food labels and use the 5%-20% guide to Daily Values to make better food choices. See www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Resources/Nibbles/readit_session.pdf for more information.
- Limit foods that are high in saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium, and added sugars, and make sure to get enough fiber and calcium.
- Use low-fat cooking methods such as baking, roasting and grilling, and choose healthy fats when you use them, such as olive or canola oils.
- Serve water, low-fat or nonfat milk with and between meals. Only children under two years always need to drink whole milk.
- Teach your children how to make wise food choices away from home—at school cafeterias, restaurants, and vending machines. Teach them to pay attention to both the quality and quantity of their food choices. More food is not always better for them; appropriate portion sizes need to be understood.



Get Moving!

Physical activity is good for children and adults. It strengthens muscles, bones and joints, and it gives children the opportunity to gain confidence while having fun. Children need at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day. Playing hopscotch, tossing a ball back and forth, and dancing are some good ways for your child to be active. Some children are good athletes, but all need many opportunities to be active, including but not limited to sports.

- Be a physically active role model and have fun with your kids. Adults need at least 30 minutes of daily physical activity.
- Walk with your child at every available opportunity—if possible to school or to the store on errands. Take a family walk after dinner instead of watching TV or playing computer games.
- Plan active weekends. Include biking, hiking, skating, walking or playing ball. Take a trip to the park, skating rink, zoo, or swimming pool.
- Offer to join your child in his/her favorite physical activity, or enroll your child in a group exercise program.
- Include children in active chores such as dog walking, house cleaning, car washing, and yard work.
- Limit inactive behavior such as television watching and computer time. Do physical activity with your kids during commercials, such as marching in place or stretching. This helps reinforce the importance of movement in your child's life.
- Avoid using TV as a child sitter or pacifier. Offer active alternatives to screen time—jumping rope, playing hide-and-seek or running an errand. Children love when you are active with them and involve them in what you do.
- Keep TV's out of children's rooms.
- Give your children gifts that encourage physical activity—active games, sporting equipment, or a Frisbee.
- Take the President's Challenge as a family. You can track your individual physical activities together and earn awards for active lifestyles at www.presidentschallenge.org.
- Talk with your schools about ways to incorporate noncompetitive physical activity during the day.





Money-Saving Ideas for Better Health

Good nutrition doesn't have to mean expensive grocery bills!

- Plan ahead. Make a list of meal ideas for the coming week. Keep in mind the days you'll have time to cook from scratch and the days you'll be pressed for time. Then make a grocery list and stick to it.
- Buy in-season fruits and vegetables. Use local farmers' markets when possible—the foods are fresher and tend to cost less.
- Purchase canned (in water or in their own juice, not heavy syrup) and frozen fruits and vegetables when fresh ones are not available or affordable. They're healthy, too, and will last longer.
- Never shop for food when you're hungry.
- Review store ads and clip coupons before shopping.
- Sign up for your grocer's bonus/discount card for additional savings.
- Stock up on sale items you can use in a timely manner. Buy in bulk for quality and value, but serve healthy portions.
- Look for items on the top and bottom shelves at the grocery store. The most costly brands are often placed at eye-level. Store brands that may be cheaper and just as good are often placed higher or lower.
- Assemble snacks at home in small baggies and use foods such as nuts and seeds, low-fat cheese and fresh veggies and fruits, rather than buying less healthy and more expensive prepackaged and processed snacks.
- Use your food budget wisely. For the price of a large bag of chips and a box of cookies, you can buy a lot of apples, bananas, carrots, potatoes, peppers and other healthy foods.



A Healthy Week-at-a-Glance

An easy and fun way to keep your family active and eating right is to create a weekly calendar of healthy lifestyle activities. Use some of the ideas below to get yourself started on building a healthy life that works for your family and your schedule.

Monday

Start a daily log of what your family eats and how they keep active; review it with them at the end of each week.

Tuesday

Go to your local community center and find out what physical activity or sports programs are available.

Wednesday

Make frozen juice pops instead of buying popsicles. They're healthier and cheaper!

Thursday

Encourage your family to use safe and accessible stairs as an active alternative to elevators and escalators.

Friday

Involve your kids in cooking and take a walk after dinner.

Saturday

Take your children food shopping and let them pick out a new fruit or vegetable to try.

Sunday

Review the coming week's school lunch menu with your kids, and talk about making healthy meal choices.





Resources for More Information

Nutrition and Physical Activity

- *Information to help Americans live healthier lives*
www.healthier.us.gov/
- *Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Across Your Lifespan*
Tips for Parents www.niddk.nih.gov/health/nutrit/pubs/parenttips/tipsforparents.htm
- *Eat Smart. Play Hard*
www.fns.usda.gov/eatsmartplayhard/
- *Nutrition and Physical Activity campaigns and programs*
www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/nutrition.htm
- *Interactive Healthy Eating Index and Interactive Physical Activity* www.usda.gov/cnpp/

Nutrition

- *Food Guide Pyramid*
www.usda.gov/cnpp/pyramid.html
- *Food Guide Pyramid for Young Children*
www.usda.gov/cnpp/KidsPyra/
- *Team Nutrition: Parent Place and Nutrition Education Resources for Children & Their Parents*
www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Parents/index.htm
www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Resources/index.htm
- *Healthy Eating Tips*
www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/tips/
- *Guidance on How to Understand & Use the Nutrition Facts Panel on Food Labels*, www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/foodlab.html
- *Food Label Interactive Quiz*
www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/flquiz1.html
- *Information on portion control*
www.niddk.nih.gov/health/nutrit/pubs/justenuff/justenough.htm
www.usda.gov/cnpp/Pubs/Brochures/HowMuchAreYouEating.pdf

Physical Activity

- *The Importance of Regular Physical Activity for Children*
www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/kidswalk/physact.htm
- *Active Children, Active Families: A Helpful Guide for Parents*
www.cdc.gov/youthcampaign/materials/adults/index.htm
- *Kids in Action: Fitness for Children Birth to Age Five*
Get Fit: A Handbook for Youth Ages 6-17 www.fitness.gov
- *Physical activity for children and youth with disabilities*
www.dhhs.gov/od/physicalfitness.html
- *Action for Healthy Kids* www.actionforhealthykids.org/
- *Steps to a HealthierUS Healthy Lifestyle Campaign*
www.healthier.us.gov/steps/index.html
- *The President's Challenge Physical Activity & Fitness Awards Program* www.presidentschallenge.org
- *Weight management and physical activity resources*
www.shapeup.org/

