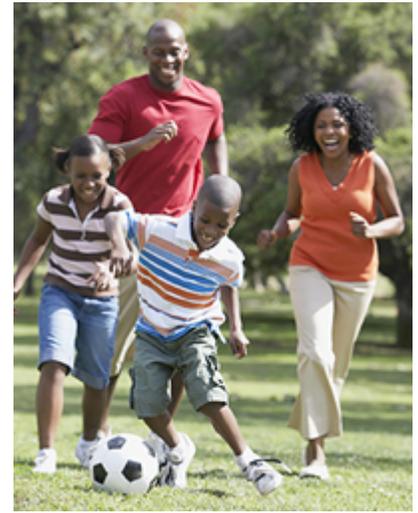


HELPING YOUR CHILD MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WEIGHT

Like any parent, you want your child to grow up healthy and happy. But for many children, unhealthy weight gain is a serious problem. Being overweight can lead to health problems such as diabetes. It can also hurt a child's self-esteem. The good news is, there is a lot you can do to help. And even if your child isn't struggling with weight, now is still a great time to teach healthy habits that last a lifetime.

What Causes Unhealthy Weight?

- Not getting enough physical activity. Watching TV, playing video games, and Internet surfing can keep children from getting exercise they need to stay healthy.
- Making unhealthy food choices. Eating too much junk food, such as soda and chips, can lead to unhealthy weight gain.
- Eating giant-sized meals. Serving adult-sized meals, even of healthy foods, can provide more calories than kids need.



Dieting Is Not the Answer

Growing children need healthy food for strong bodies. They should NOT be put on calorie-restricting diets. Instead, kids should be encouraged to play each day, and to eat healthy foods instead of junk foods. This helps a child grow naturally into a healthy weight. Remember, being fit doesn't mean being thin. Healthy bodies come in all shapes and sizes. If you have concerns about your child's weight, talk with your child's doctor.

Set a Good Example

The most important role model your child will ever have is YOU. So you can't expect your child to change his or her habits if you don't set a good example. This might mean making changes in your own routine, like watching less TV. But the results are worth it! Setting a good example not only helps your child; it can help the whole family feel better. Involve other adults in your child's life. And never tease your child about weight.

Small Changes Add Up

Changing habits isn't easy. It helps, though, if you don't try to tackle too much at once. Start with small things, like buying fruit for snacks and taking your child for walks. Over time, making small changes will add up to big improvements. Children can also adapt to changes better if they feel involved.

Good Habits Last a Lifetime

Set a good example with words and actions. A game of catch can show your child the fun in being active. A trip to the store can be a lesson about choosing fruits and veggies. Teaching kids to make healthy diet and exercise choices is like teaching them to brush their teeth. Habits formed now will stay with them forever.