

## Overweight Children: What You Can Do

Parents may think their overweight children are healthy and happy. But overweight children are often teased and bullied at school. They may feel sad about their extra weight.

Use these tips to help your child feel better and get control of extra weight:

- Eat 3 meals and 1-2 snacks every day. Finish meals within 45 minutes.
- Eat as a family at the table with the TV turned off.
- Try to do things at the same time each day: meals, snacks, homework, physical activity, and bedtime—even on weekends.
- Encourage physical activity for at least 30 minutes each day.
- Limit TV, phone calls, video games, and computers to an hour per day. Keep the TV out of your child's bedroom.
- Write down all the food your child eats and exercise times in a "log book."
- See your doctor, nurse, or dietitian on schedule so they can evaluate your child and the food log book.
- Watch serving sizes. Do not allow your child to serve herself. Do not force your child to clean her plate.
- Read labels carefully. A small package may have more than one serving.
- If your child wants "seconds," let him choose one item from the meal. Still hungry? Wait 20 minutes before giving additional food.
- Decrease the serving size of starchy foods (rice, potatoes, bread, pasta). Instead, use colorful vegetables.
- Serve biscuits or rolls on special occasions. Use whole wheat or other whole grain breads.
- Serve whole-grain cereals and oatmeal. Serve cereals with skim milk.
- Eat steamed, broiled, baked, or grilled foods instead of fried foods.
- Use herbs and spices instead of sugar, salt, or fat.
- Eat lean meats and vegetables. Cook with olive oil, peanut oil, or canola oil. Stay away from saturated fats like butter, chicken skin, bacon, and fatback.
- Eat salmon, light tuna, catfish, or shrimp twice a week, but no fish from the same body of water more than once per month.
- Use fruit, sugar-free flavored gelatin, and pudding as desserts.
- Limit fast food and prepared foods (such as frozen dinners) to no more than once a week.
- Limit sugary and fatty snacks such as cakes, cookies, candies, chips and fries. Instead eat low-fat cheese, vegetables with a low-calorie dip, or fruits.
- Serve fruits and vegetables or a cup of skim milk for a bedtime snack if your child is hungry.
- Stay away from sugary drinks like sodas, juices, juice drinks, or sweetened tea. Instead, drink water, sugar-free lemonade, or skim milk.
- Drink milk for calcium every day. Children over age 2 who cannot drink regular milk should try lactose-free milk, yogurt, or cheese.
- Give water or skim milk between meals.
- Pack your child lunches from home.
- Do not eat in the car.
- During holidays, limit candy and other sugary or fatty treats. Get rid of extra treats after one week.
- Talk to your child's doctor about the need for children's multivitamins.
- Tell family, friends, teachers, and sitters about your plan for your child to eat healthy food. Ask for their help.
- If your plans for good health for your child get messed up today, don't worry. Get back on track tomorrow.



UT Medical Group  
Department of Pediatrics  
Primary Care Clinic



University of Tennessee  
College of Medicine  
Department of Pediatrics  
Division of General Pediatrics

