

What Can You do to Help Your Overweight Child?

In the past three decades, the United States has seen the number of obese 6-11 year olds triple and the number of preschoolers and teenagers double. Depending on who you listen to, obesity has surpassed smoking as the number one cause of preventable death in this country. Obese children have the same problems as obese adults, such as; diabetes, heart disease and high blood pressure. Overweight children will carry these health problems with them all of the overweight lives.

The reasons for childhood obesity are complicated. Less time involved in physical activity, increased time in front of a screen and increased intake of fast food are probably they biggest contributing factors to this epidemic. The best way to approach this problem is to look at it as a family problem and not an individual problem. This way the overweight members do not feel like they are being singled out and the members that are not overweight will not lose anything by eating healthier and exercising more.

You as parents must remember you are in control. You are buying the food and are ultimately the one that makes the final decision as to what will be eaten. Unfortunately, if you are overweight and have poor nutrition habits, your child is likely to have your weight problems and will adopt your eating habits. Making these small changes will get you and your family started on the road to better health.

1. Fruits and vegetables are a better choice than convenience foods. Healthy snacks should always be available. Food is not a reward or a punishment.
2. Bake, broil or steam food instead of frying it.
3. Eat meals as family. No eating in front of the TV.
4. Set limits on your children's time in front of the TV, computer or video games.
5. Set limits on sweetened drinks. This includes juice, because many of them are high in sugar.
6. Make dinners colorful and appealing. Serve whole grain breads and limit pasta, white bread, rice and sugar intake.

Do not force this lifestyle change on a child. In most cases if you can make enough changes for child to maintain their weight, they will grow into it. Overtime your children will see the benefits of healthy lifestyle, especially if you have adopted one. They will soon follow in your footsteps. Above all, let your child know that you love them unconditionally.

Nearly 25 percent of all blacks, Hispanics and Native Americans are considered obese by medical standards. Poverty stricken individuals are also at higher risk for obesity. Tragically it is more expensive to eat healthy than to buy convenience foods.

If your school has junk food machines, you can ask that they be removed or filled with healthy food. You can also request that physical education classes be part of your child's school curriculum.

You must make the time in your schedule to serve healthy meals and participate in an exercise plan. This may take some planning on your part, but the life long rewards will be well worth it in the end for you and for your children.

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About the Author

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