



About 1 in 5 American children are obese. Children that are overweight or obese are at a higher risk for asthma, sleep apnea, bone and joint problems, type 2 diabetes and heart disease. Check out these tips below to help children reach a healthy weight and create lifelong healthy habits.



1. Model a healthy eating pattern

Adopting healthy eating patterns as a family helps children reach and maintain a healthy weight as they age.

- ▶ Try to incorporate a variety of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, lean protein foods, and low-fat and fat-free dairy products to follow nutrition guidelines
- ▶ Make half their plate fruits and vegetables
- ▶ Frozen and canned fruits and vegetables are often less expensive than fresh produce and still good for you
- ▶ Look for vegetables with low sodium or no salt added and pick canned fruits packed in 100% fruit juice
- ▶ Replace sugary drinks, such as soda, fruit drinks and flavored milk, with water, 100% juice or plain low-fat milk



2. Move more as a family

Help your children move more and meet the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans by making it a family affair. Physically active youth have stronger muscles and bones, better cardiovascular fitness and lower body fat than those who are inactive.

- ▶ Children ages 3 – 5 years should be physically active throughout the day.
- ▶ Children ages 6 – 17 years need at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day.

Walking the family pet before and after school, riding bikes and having races in the yard all count toward physical activity. Even incorporating children in active chores, such as washing the car, vacuuming a room or raking leaves, are effortless ways to get your children to move more.



3. Set consistent sleep routines

Good sleep helps prevent type 2 diabetes, obesity, injuries and problems with attention and behavior. Sticking to a consistent sleep schedule, including on weekends, can help children sleep better.

How much sleep do kids need?

- ▶ Preschoolers need 11 – 13 hours of sleep per day, including naps.
- ▶ Children 6 – 12 years old need 9 – 12 hours of uninterrupted sleep every night.
- ▶ Youth 13 – 18 years old need 8 – 10 hours.



4. Replace screen time with family time

For young people, too much screen time can lead to poor sleep, weight gain, lower grades in school and poor mental health. Reducing screen time can free up time for family activities and can remove cues to eat unhealthy food.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends creating a family media plan with examples of how to reduce screen time. Turning screens off an hour before bed and removing screens from children's bedrooms can improve sleep.

Talk to your child's healthcare provider if you are concerned about potential health risks associated with excess weight. Families can adopt healthy routines together, but they also need supportive environments.