



Growing Up Healthy & Active

March

Weight Management

When the numbers on the scale creep up a bit adults know that it's time to start watching what they eat and increase physical activity to get that number back down. Is the same true for children? Experts say the answer is "No, not always!"

A normal pattern of growth for children is to add weight and then use that weight to support the next growth spurt. Thus, the growth charts used for children are different from those used for adults. Ask your child's physician how to track weight gains.

The most important weight-related "rules" for both children and adults is to be healthy at any weight and recognize that there are different body shapes and types. Developing healthy habits is good prevention training for all children, regardless of their current weight. Here are a few ways you can help your children:

- Offer a variety of nutritious foods for planned meals and snacks that are offered at regular times. (Studies show that children who eat regular meals and snacks control their weight more successfully.)
- Help children learn to identify and pay attention to feelings of hunger and fullness. It's okay if children sometimes don't want to finish a meal (or even pass on eating) and other times want second or third helpings.
- Model healthy eating habits and point out other adults who also do so.
- Help children maintain a healthy weight by purchasing fewer high-calorie, low nutrient foods like pop, cookies, chips, and candy. Encourage children to think of these foods as occasional treats—not as a daily part of meals or snacks.
- Set an example by being physically active. Limit TV and computer time for all family members. Use "free" time to find activities you can enjoy together that will get you moving.
- Involving children when selecting and preparing food has many benefits—for you and for them. Children are more likely to taste and eat foods that they help choose and prepare. Learning through participation also helps children feel like they are helping the family.
- Pre-portioning meals and snacks helps children learn appropriate portion sizes. A general rule is one tablespoon of food per year of age for toddlers and preschoolers.
- Turn off the television during meals. A recent study looked at television viewing habits of 91 families having a fourth through sixth grader. Those that included television viewing as a normal part of meal routines tended to eat fewer fruits and vegetables and more pizzas, snack foods, and sodas. Television viewing and eating are separate activities and deserve to be treated as such.

Just Do It – Get Active

- ◆ Turn on the radio and dance around the house together.
- ◆ Play balloon volleyball using a string between two chairs for the net.
- ◆ Take a nature walk. Look for tracks of animals in the snow.
- ◆ Set a time limit and everyone pitch in to clean as much of the house as fast as you can.

Recipes of the Month: Fruit Treats

- ◆ Place apple, peach, or pineapple chunks in a microwave safe bowl. Sprinkle with cinnamon and sugar; microwave for 1 to 5 minutes.
- ◆ Put 1 cup of 100 percent fruit juice in the blender. Add chunks of frozen fruit, one piece at a time, to make a frozen fruit slush. (Try blueberries, peaches, pineapple, strawberries, bananas, or cantaloupe.)

For More Information

Visit these ISU Extension Web sites:

Nutrition—www.extension.iastate.edu/healthnutrition

Answerline—www.extension.iastate.edu/answerline

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