



## Healthy Hints from Earth's Best



### Healthy Habits for Healthy Weight Kids

☺ **Be a proactive parent.** While genetics does play an important role in what your child's weight will be, the environment in which they are raised will have just as powerful of an effect. Parents must model healthy eating and activity patterns and must establish the same in their children. Preventing overweight will be easier and healthier than trying to help the child lose weight.

☺ **Schedule regular meals and snack.** Children who don't skip meals, and who eat regular meals and snacks have healthier weights than children who skip meals or who have long stretches of time between meals. It may be that frequent eating prevents out of control hunger. Smaller, frequent meals and snacks means food is being used for immediate energy and growth needs and is not being stored as fat.

☺ **Build up your child's self esteem.** In a study published in Obesity Research, November, 2005, it was reported that girls with higher self-esteem in childhood were more likely to remain thin throughout adolescence.

☺ **Teach and serve reasonable portion sizes.** Between the ages of three and five, children learn to eat based more on what's put in front of them, then on hunger cues. In studies testing response to visual cues to eating, five year olds ate more food, the more they were served. On the other hand, three year olds didn't eat more, despite how large the serving size became. Knowing that we lose our ability to eat according to hunger, controlling portion sizes is all the more important. Keep portions small and don't put serving plates on the table. This will minimize visual stimulus to eating more than necessary and will help with weight management.

☺ **Participate in vigorous activity every day.** Children who participate in regular, vigorous activities are highly likely to be fit and lean. Children learn how to make daily physical activity part of their lifestyle by observing their parents do so.

☺ **Encouragement and small victories are crucial to success.** Provide non-food incentives to help children become and stay active and to eat healthfully. Perhaps creating a point system where points are earned, for example, for choosing an active game instead of watching a television show. Points can be traded in for prizes such as a toy or a trip to the zoo. Be armed with specific suggestions that incorporate physical activity when your children are looking for 'something to do'.

☺ **Limit high fat foods.** Foods high in fat are high in calories. Limit, but do not eliminate, the number of high fat foods you offer your children and keep their portion size small.

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