

PEDIATRIC WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

Top 10 List of Opportunities for Change:

1. **Parents control the number of meals per day.** Parents present meals at regularly scheduled times. A wide variety of foods are offered. Children are encouraged to taste all foods. Children are guided to serving their own portions. May be best for parents to control food access until age 8.
2. **Parents control number of snacks per day.** Set regularly scheduled times. Let children choose from a selection of approved snacks.
3. **Parents control number of times per day eating activity is initiated.** Avoid letting children "graze".
4. **Increase family meals.** These are times for learning good food habits as well as having positive family interaction.
5. **Monitor beverage consumption.** Make reasonable limits for juice, soda, and other sugary drinks. Encourage water. Get adequate milk.
6. **Increase fruit and vegetable intake.** Remember, it may take 8 to 15 exposures to a new food to get a child to like it. The child will learn to like the food prepared in the manner you offer it. Therefore, avoid added salt and sugar to these items.
7. **Know what child sized portions are.** Offer them to your child. Teach them to your child. Teach them to others who feed your child.
8. **Be cautious when eating out.** Watch for correct portions, preparation methods, and nutrient content. Select healthier restaurants and make better choices.
9. **Try to limit the number of caregivers feeding your child,** or be sure that your caregivers are being consistent with your desired meal plan.
10. **Stick to basic schedules/routines.** Children need to know what to expect.

CHANGING EATING BEHAVIORS IN CHILDREN

1. **It is hard to change a habit.** It is especially hard to change a habit if the people around you do not change. Therefore, changing the eating habits of children must be a part of a family effort. If the child is going to be encouraged to avoid soda, candy, and chips on weekdays, the rest of the family should do so as well. If the child is going to be encouraged to eat 5 fruits and vegetables a day, the rest of the family should do so as well.
2. **Avoid "diets" that harshly restrict foods or are very structured.** This usually encourages the child to "go underground" and eat in hiding. It is better to focus on what you can eat, find fun ways to present new foods, and still allow all favorite foods in moderation.
3. **Avoid restricting foods "in plain sight".** Do not have a cookie jar on the counter and then tell the child he can only have a serving of cookies on Saturday night. If that is the case, wait to bring the cookies into the house when it is time to serve them.
4. **Make changes that the child and family can live with.** For example, it may be impossible to omit fast foods, if the family usually eats out several times a week due to busy schedules. The focus should be on making healthier choices and providing correct portions as restaurants.
5. **Decrease emotional eating.** Encourage the child to discuss issues that upset them and help them learn to deal with sadness, anger, fear, etc. Find other activities to do when bored or upset - talk to a friend or parent, keep a journal, play outside.
6. **Increase nutrient intake.** The goal of healthy eating is not only to control weight. Children need adequate nutrition for growth and development, for energy, for mental alertness, and to prevent disease. Focus on overall good health and wellness.
7. As an adult, it is your responsibility to develop a feeding schedule, to provide a wide variety of foods, and to teach children healthy eating behaviors. It is the child's responsibility to eat at the family table, taste foods, and control how much they eat.