

PARENT HEALTH BULLETIN



Pinellas County Health Department

Steps to a HealthierFL-Pinellas County

Can Parents Prevent Their Kids From Becoming Obese?

People who are obese are very overweight and at risk for health problems. Poor eating and exercise habits can start in childhood. Parents can help because they make daily decisions about what the family does in their spare time, what foods are available, and how much physical activity the family gets. Here are some suggestions on how to prevent obesity:

Babyhood

Breastfeeding may help protect babies from becoming obese children. Don't give them sweetened beverages and high fat/sweet foods because it may lead to childhood obesity.

Toddlers and Young Children

Give children lots of chances to try new foods, without forcing them. Many of these foods will become part of their diet. Parents can also teach children to eat the right amount of food by reminding them to stop eating when they feel full.

Older Children and Youth

Make meal times a family event (studies show that the more families eat together, the more likely older children will eat fruits, vegetables, grains, and calcium-rich foods). As children get older, they start to make their own choices and they also start to control some of the family food purchases. Parents can support healthy eating by making nutritious foods available.

Sweetened Beverages

Teach children to avoid high-calorie, nutrient-poor beverages. These beverages do not offer the nutrients needed by growing children, but do increase their calorie intake. By age 14, 32% of adolescent girls and 52% of boys in the U.S. drink three sweetened sodas a day.

Physical Activity

Support your children's physical activity interest and get them to play outside. Many recreation centers offer free or low cost physical activity programs geared toward youth.

Television Viewing and Recreational Screen Time

Limit children's TV, video, or computer game playing to less than two hours per day. One study found that youth who watch more than five hours of television per day were 4.6 times as likely to be obese as those watching no more than two hours daily.

Parents as Role Models

Set a good example for children by eating healthy and being physically active.



FREE
Weight Management Classes
The Pinellas County Health Dept.
offers **FREE** classes to help
you manage a healthy weight.
For more information call

727-820-4113

or visit:

www.pinellaswellness.com



The keys to having a healthy weight are regular exercise and good eating habits. Each day, exercise at least 30 minutes—and eat 5 to 9 fruits and vegetables.



Don't Reward Your Child with Food

Instead of rewarding your child with food reward them with attention (hugs, kisses and smiles) and playful activities. Rewarding your child with food:

Adds to Poor Health

Foods usually used as rewards (like candy, cookies, and fast food) can add to health problems.

Promotes Eating Unhealthy Foods

Foods used as rewards are usually “empty calorie” foods—high in fat, sugar, & salt with little nutrition. Offering a desert as a reward for eating healthy foods can teach kids to prefer unhealthy foods.

Creates Poor Eating Habits

Rewarding kids with food may teach kids to eat when they are NOT hungry.



Don't single out the overweight members of your family for lifestyle changes. Eating healthier foods and getting more exercise is good for everybody.

Give your child enough table time.

Does your child seem to waste time at the table? That's normal. Young children don't have the muscle development or skills to eat as fast as you. They still need practice with silverware. Eat at a pace that allows you to enjoy your food. It takes about 20 minutes for the stomach to feel full. Rushing mealtime only leads to frustration for you, your child, and others at the table.