

PARENT HEALTH BULLETIN



Pinellas County Health Department

Steps to a HealthierFL—Pinellas County

The Ticket to Preventing Childhood Obesity

Empower Your Children

Helping your children get healthy and stay healthy is not always easy. It is hard for them to resist the unhealthy snacks, sodas and fast food that are all around them. It is also tough to get them away from the television and computer screens to get up and enjoy physical activity. What we eat and how much we move around has a big impact on our health. As parents, we have a responsibility to make sure our children eat healthy foods and get enough physical activity. By helping your children make better choices now, you can make a big difference in their health and quality of life in the future.

You Can Do It!

The good news is that small changes often make a huge difference. Focus on a few areas for improvement. You will find you run into less resistance from your children, but still have a positive impact on their health. Eating together as a family instead of grabbing fast food on the run will lead to big improvements. Planning family time around physical activities will also help.

Help Children Make the Right Choices

The best way to make your children healthier is to help them take charge of their own health. You can influence what they eat, where they eat and encourage them to play and exercise more. You may not be able to control everything, but by making healthy choices when and where you can, you will gradually see some positive changes.

www.healthiergeneration.org



Remember Portion Control

How many calories you eat affects your weight and health. It is important to eat the right foods, but it is also important to look at how much you eat. Choosing nutritious foods and keeping serving sizes small, also called portion control, may help you reach and stay at a healthy weight. Here are some tips to help you and your child with portion sizes.

- ◆ A half cup serving of canned fruit, vegetables or potatoes looks like half a tennis ball sitting on your plate.
- ◆ 3 ounces of meat, fish or chicken is about the size of a deck of playing cards or the palm of your hand.
- ◆ A 1 ounce serving of cheese is about the size of your thumb.
- ◆ A 1 cup serving of milk, yogurt or fresh greens is about the size of your fist.
- ◆ 1 teaspoon of oil is about the size of your thumb tip.



Restaurants usually serve very large portions. Try these tips to cut calories.

- ◆ Eat only half a meal and take the other half home.
- ◆ Split a meal or dessert with a friend or family member.
- ◆ Ask for substitutions (for example, ask for steamed vegetables or a salad instead of French fries).
- ◆ Ask for all sauce, dressing and gravy on the side.
- ◆ Order an appetizer or salad as your main course.

Here are 10 tips that can help your child fight obesity by learning healthy eating habits from the American Heart Association



- ◆ **Start by introducing healthier choices into foods that your child already likes.** For example, offer fruit slices over a favorite cereal, chunks of bell pepper in a potato salad or shredded veggies over rice.
- ◆ **Include your kids in the prep work.** By being involved in grocery shopping and food preparation, your kids will have more “buy-in.” If they feel some ownership over the meal, they may be more likely to eat it.
- ◆ **Don't buy unhealthy foods.** Out of sight, out of mind. If chips and cookies aren't around, your kids can't eat them. They may resist at first, but when they get hungry, they'll start munching the carrot sticks you provide. Keep healthy foods on hand, such as bottled water instead of colas or sugary drinks, and a bag of apples or cut-up veggies instead of a bag of chips.
- ◆ **Schedule snack time and stick to it.** Most kids like routine. If your kids know they will only get food at certain times, they will eat what they get when they get it. Try to have snacks in two food groups. For example, offer cheese and whole-grain crackers or apple slices with low-fat yogurt or cottage cheese.
- ◆ **Have healthy finger foods available.** Kids like to pick up foods, so give them foods they can handle. Fruit and veggie chunks (raw or cooked) are great finger-food options.
- ◆ **Do away with the “clean your plate” rule.** Kids know when they're full, so let them stop. Overeating is one of the major reasons we get too many calories.
- ◆ **Encourage kids to “eat their colors.”** This game works well with younger kids. Food that is bland in color often also lacks nutrients. Eating a variety of brightly colored foods provides more nutrients in greater variety.
- ◆ **Don't cut out treats altogether.** Think moderation. A scoop of ice cream or a serving of Oreos is all right occasionally. If you cut out all the goodies, your kids will be more likely to overeat when they do get them.
- ◆ **“Veg out” at the dinner table, not the TV.** Eating in front of the TV is distracting and kids may not notice that they're full because they're wrapped up in the show. Eating as a family is a great time to catch up.
- ◆ **Be a good role model.** The best way to influence kids is by example. Don't expect them to eat spinach if you won't touch it.



http://www.helpguide.org/mental/childhood_obesity.htm



Healthy Choices Restaurant Program

When eating out, sometimes it is hard to find restaurants that serve healthy food. Families can be very busy with work, school, homework, sports and after school activities. Eating out has become an easy and almost essential option. In Pinellas County local restaurants have stepped up to the plate and now offer healthier options to their menus for children and adults. Some restaurants even show the calorie count of the foods they serve.

For a listing of all of the participating Healthy Choices Restaurants or more information about the program go to www.pinellaswellness.com. Also look for the “Just Ask Us” decal in the window to know if your favorite restaurant is participating.

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For information about **Steps to a HealthierFL-Pinellas County** visit our website: www.StepsFL.com or call 2-1-1 (Pinellas County cell phone users must call 727-210-4211)