Today one in five children in the United States is overweight. Overweight children are at risk of becoming overweight adults. Overweight adults are at risk of health problems including heart disease, diabetes, and high blood pressure.

Children become overweight for many reasons. The most common causes are family history, consuming too many high-calorie foods, and lifestyle factors, such as too much TV watching and too little physical activity.

**EAT SMART**

Childhood and the teen years are a time of rapid growth. For that growth to take place, your child needs the right amount of calories, protein, vitamins, and minerals. Follow the Food Guide Pyramid and eat foods from ALL the food groups for meals and snacks. Follow the principles of eating a VARIETY of foods from all the food groups and eat in MODERATION.

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY

Family involvement teaches everyone healthy eating and exercise habits and does not single out the overweight child.

Follow these tips to help your family Eat Smart!

- Eat meals together as a family.
- Encourage pleasant conversation during meals. Avoid arguing or scolding during mealt ime.
- Schedule regular mealtimes and snacks. Without regular mealtimes and snacks, children tend to eat all day long and choose foods high in calories, fat, and sugar.
- Make meals last more than 15 minutes.
- Plan and prepare meals together with your children. Let children help you shop for groceries. Children are more likely to try new foods if they helped prepare them.

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TAILOR PORTION SIZES
Young children need smaller portions than adults do. Use smaller plates. Let children know they can have seconds if they are still hungry. Especially watch portion sizes when you eat out; many restaurants promote specials that are 2 to 3 times the recommended serving size.

What counts as one serving?
Don't overdo it!
Grain Group -
One serving is 1 slice of bread or 1 ounce of ready-to-eat cereal.

Vegetable Group -
One serving is 1/2 cup cooked or raw vegetables.

Fruit Group -
One serving is a piece of fruit, 1/2 cup of canned fruit or 3/4 cup fruit juice.

Milk Group -
One serving is 1 cup of milk or eat 1 cup yogurt or 2 ounces of cheese.

Meat Group -
One serving is 2 to 3 ounces of a cooked lean meat, poultry, fish (The size of a deck of cards), eggs, beans or nuts.

Fats and Sweets Group -
Eat sparingly from this group. It includes foods such as salad dressing, butter, margarine, sugars, soft drinks, and candies.

MAKE MILK OR WATER THE DRINK OF CHOICE FOR CHILDREN
Soft drink consumption has greatly increased in the United States in the past 20 years. Soft drink container sizes have increased, too. The concern is that soft drinks - which are high in sugar and calories - are replacing milk and juice in children's diets and, therefore, decreasing their calcium and vitamin C intake.

- Milk is the best drink for children with meals or in between. Parents should be a role model and drink their milk, too.
- Keep a pitcher of cold water in the refrigerator. Serve it in a colored glass with a straw and slice of lemon to make it special.
- Juice that is 100% fruit juice may have more vitamins, minerals and fiber than fruit drinks or dry mix-type drinks. However, some fruit drinks may be fortified with vitamins. Read the label to make informed choices.
- Fruit juice and fruit drinks are high in sugar; therefore, like many high-sugar foods, they can be filling and lead to cavities if drunk too often.

READ THE LABEL
Read the label on food packages to determine fat and sugar content. It is a guide for amounts that are too high.

MONITOR SCREEN TIME
Being a "couch potato" by watching too much TV and playing video games takes children away from physical activities. The amount of time spent watching TV and playing video games is directly related to obesity in children.

- Avoid eating meals or snacks while watching TV.
- Limit TV and video games to no more than 2 hours per day.

Did you know?
The average American youth spends 900 hours per year in school.
The average American youth watches 1,023 hours of television per year.

Turn off the TV
And get outside!
PLAY HARD
Regular physical activity, combined with healthy eating, is the most efficient and healthful way to control your weight.

Children need at least 30 minutes of exercise per day—preferably more.

- Involve the whole family in physical activity: walking, dancing to music, hiking, swimming, biking, skating, and jumping rope.
- WALK - to school, to work.
- Climb the stairs.
- Participate in sports and recreational activities.

BE A GOOD ROLE MODEL
Let your children see you eating healthy foods and having fun being physically active. They are more likely to join in and develop good habits, too.

Suggestions of foods to eat from each Food Group of the Food Guide Pyramid.

Breads and Cereals

**Often:**
- Whole grain or enriched breads
- English muffins
- Ready-to-eat un-sugared cereals
- Rice white and brown
- Oyster crackers
- Macaroni
- Breadsticks
- Saltines

**Sometimes:**
- Pancakes

**Rarely:**
- Croissants
- Ready-to-eat sugared cereals
- Pastries
- Tortilla chips

Fruits and Vegetables

**Often:**
- All fresh fruits & vegetables
- Fruits canned juice
- Fruit juices
- Soups, include cream soups made with skim milk

**Sometimes:**
- Fruits canned in light syrup
- Vegetables frozen with butter or other sauce

**Rarely:**
- Fruits canned in heavy syrup
- French-fries
- Frozen Fruit-flavored bars
- Hash browns
- Canned cream soups

Hints:
- Herbs and spices add flavor to food and are low in calories.
- Keep a bowl of fresh fruit on the kitchen counter or table to encourage your kids to eat fruit.
- Keep a crisper of cut-up veggies in the refrigerator so your kids can help themselves to an easy snack.
- Add fruit or applesauce to sugar-free gelatin for a dessert.
- Choose plain frozen vegetables (not vegetables in cream sauce or cheese sauce) for less fat and fewer calories.

Milk and Milk Products

**Often:**
- Nonfat milk
- Milk, reduced fat 1% or 2%
- Chocolate milk, reduced fat
- Buttermilk made from skim or low-fat milk
- Cream cheese, nonfat

**Sometimes:**
- Cheese made with whole milk such as cheddar, jack or Swiss
- Ice cream, reduced fat, low-fat, or light Sherbert
- Nonfat milk
- Cream cheese, light or reduced fat

**Rarely:**
- Croissants
- Ready-to-eat sugared cereals
- Pastries
- Tortilla chips

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bagels</th>
<th>Tortillas, flour and corn</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pita</td>
<td>Cooked cereals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spaghetti</td>
<td>Noodles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grits, boiled</td>
<td>Pretzels</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quick breads</td>
<td>Graham crackers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Waffles</td>
<td>Granola</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cheese crackers</td>
<td>Corn chips</td>
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<tr>
<td>Granola bars</td>
<td>Snack crackers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Canned vegetables
Plain frozen yogurt
Vegetable juices
Frozen fruit-juice bars
Pickles, olives

**Hints:**
- Herbs and spices add flavor to food and are low in calories.
- Keep a bowl of fresh fruit on the kitchen counter or table to encourage your kids to eat fruit.
- Keep a crisper of cut-up veggies in the refrigerator so your kids can help themselves to an easy snack.
- Add fruit or applesauce to sugar-free gelatin for a dessert.
- Choose plain frozen vegetables (not vegetables in cream sauce or cheese sauce) for less fat and fewer calories.

Nonfat or low-fat dry milk
Low-fat cheeses such as Cottage cheese, reduced fat ricotta or mozzarella.
Yogurt, low-fat or nonfat

Cottage cheese
Frozen yogurt

Whole milk
**Rarely:**
- Ice Cream
- Half and half
- Whipped Cream

**Hints:**
- Drink low-fat or nonfat milk and dairy products. The calcium content is the same; only the fat content is reduced.
- Make instant pudding with skim milk and cream soups with skim milk or water.

**Meat, Poultry, Fish, Eggs, Beans, and Nuts**

**Often:**
- Well-trimmed, lean cuts of beef, pork, veal, and lamb.
- Chicken and turkey without skin
- Refried beans made without lard
- Light or reduced-fat deli meat products

**Sometimes:**
- Pumpkin & sunflower seeds
- Peanuts, pistachios, cashews, macadamia nuts, walnuts, almonds, pecans

**Rarely:**
- Frankfurters
- Deep-fried chicken and fish
- Tuna canned in oil
- Hamburger or ground beef with 30% fat
- Refried beans made with lard

**Hints:**
- Meats should be baked, broiled, or grilled; avoid fried and deep-fat-fried foods.
- Breading or coating, sauces and gravies add many calories to food.
- Any visible fat should be trimmed from meat and poultry and skin should be removed from poultry.
- Solidified fat can be skimmed from soups and stews after leaving them in the refrigerator overnight.
- Choose low-fat luncheon meats and deli-meats.

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**Sweets, Fats, and Snack Foods**

**Often:**
- Unbuttered popcorn
- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Bagels

**Sometimes:**
- Cookies, low-fat or fat-free like fig bars, ginger snaps, animal crackers
- Salad dressing, reduced fat

**Rarely:**
- Margarine and butter
- Jam, jelly, marmalade
- Soft drinks

**Hints:**
- How food is prepared makes a difference: Preferred methods of food preparation are BAKING, BOILING, STEAMING, BROILING, and STIR-FRYING in a non-stick pan using little, if any, fat. Pan-frying and deep fat frying are NOT recommended, as these methods of food preparation greatly increase the fat and thus the caloric value of food. Nonstick sprays can be used for frying and baking.

**REFERENCES:**
- American Dietetics Association. www.eatright.org
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. www.cdc.gov/