

GROWING HEALTHY EATERS!

Lucille Beseler, MS, RDN, LDN, CDE
Family Nutrition Center of South Florida

www.feedinginfantsntoddlers.com

If our country's obesity epidemic is not stopped, our children will have a lower life expectancy than their parents! Thirty percent of children are now overweight, obese, or at risk for being overweight. To ignore these statistics will have disastrous consequences on our children's health as well as in the future of our society.

A five-year-old who is just five pounds overweight will not grow out of it. Five pounds may mean the difference between being classified as overweight and obese.

Being obese and overweight affects all races, ethnicities and genders causing many physical problems, leading to chronic diseases like:

- hypertension
- lipid disorders
- Type 2 diabetes
- coronary heart disease
- stroke
- gallbladder disease
- osteoarthritis
- sleep apnea
- respiratory problems
- certain cancers

The estimated cost to our society to treat obesity-related disorders is \$100 Billion.

Childhood obesity and overweight is a complex combination of genetics, diet, physical inactivity, and socioeconomic factors.

Childhood health problems connected to obesity is similar to that of adults':

- Type 2 diabetes
- fatty liver precursor to cirrhosis
- obstructive sleep apnea
- increased blood pressure
- increased cholesterol levels
- early puberty

Obese and overweight kids suffer the emotional impact of bullying, low self-esteem, retaliation, and even suicide. The resulting damage can last a lifetime.

Parents say they have no time to prepare meals, *but* the average family spends 22-24 hours per week watching TV. We're eating less home-cooked meals and more fast food and restaurant meals with lots of fried foods. We eat less fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, and food portions are excessive. Little

kids are eating “man-sized portions.” Soda and snack machines, fast food chains on-site at schools, aggressive advertising by food companies and fast food restaurants targeted at kids all compound the problem.

What parents can do to grow health eater:

Clean out the kitchen cabinets.

Make room for foods lower in sugar—read those labels. Cereals, snacks, and juices provide the most sugar in our kids’ diets. Keep snacks less than 100 calories, approximately 15 grams of carbohydrate, and 3 grams fat. Choose high fiber cereals with more than 3 grams of fiber but no more than 6 grams of sugar.

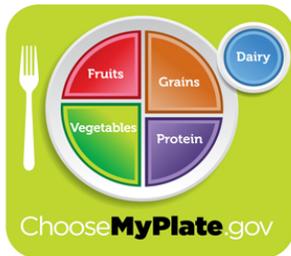
Clean out the refrigerator.

Stock it with fresh fruits and vegetables. “Eat 5 servings of vegetables and fruit per day” should be your mantra! Include a vegetable in every dinner.

Be good role models. If you don’t eat vegetables, neither will your children. Convey only positive messages regarding food and health. Teach children to eat only when hungry and stop using food as a reward for good behavior. No fad diets for children even overweight children! Do not put them on diets that restrict “carbs” or high protein diets.

Start each day right. Make sure your child (and you too!) has a complete breakfast before leaving for school. Include a high fiber carbohydrate and protein. A slice of high-fiber bread with a slice of low fat cheese or peanut butter, with a serving of fruit, and a calcium-rich beverage is all you need!

Check the new My Plate to help you plan your meals.



Make beverages count. Encourage water consumption and ditch the sugary beverages including juice and soda. Use fat free milk or soy milk or rice milk. Teach your kids to know the difference between hunger and thirst.

Make healthy family meals a priority. No time to cook? Consider batch cooking meals on the weekend or use healthy prepared foods to create an almost home-cooked meal. Chicken strips with a vegetable salad and a wheat roll make a fast healthy meal. Cooking methods should include grilling, broiling and not frying.

Use the table. Eat only in designated dining areas. Poor eating habits are formed when kids eat watching TV or eat in the car.

Start moving. Making family exercise activity a priority can make a positive difference. Limit children's screen time from electronic devices and replace it with physical activity.

Changing your families eating patterns is difficult and will take some time.

Start slow and keep building, adding new healthy eating techniques each week.

Remember what you do is much more important than what you say.

What schools can do:

Continue to teach healthy lifestyles and environment.

Schedule sports practices and games earlier.

Encourage vendors to sell healthy foods at events.

Promote healthy snacks in the classroom and reward children with non-food items.

Think carefully before allowing vending machine companies and fast food companies into schools.

Shop Smart! Get your children involved in selecting the food that will appear at the breakfast, lunch or dinner table.

Cook Healthy! Involve your child in the cutting, mixing and preparation of all meals.

Even a snack can be healthy.

Eat right! Sit down together as a family to enjoy a nutritious meal and the opportunity to share the day's experiences with one another.*

For more help check out <http://www.kidseatright.org> --a great source for scientifically-based health and nutrition information from nutrition professionals.

**Shop Smart! Cook Healthy! Eat Right! is a message from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics as part of the Kids' Eat Right Campaign.*