

Here are some practical tips for controlling weight problems and overeating in children:

- Prevention is the key. Following growth throughout childhood can identify children at risk. If children are overweight before adolescence, the goal is to try to maintain the same weight. This way, as children gain in height, they will thin out.
- Have the whole family model healthy eating patterns. If the child is discouraged from certain food choices, but other family members are allowed those choices, the child will feel singled out as having a problem. Make healthy eating a family choice.
- Add a family physical activity, like walking or biking.
- Don't calorie-restrict children. Don't take the message of dieting or low fat or no fat eating to the extreme. Don't obsess with your child over every fat gram and sugar calorie. The goal is to make better choices, but still fulfill a normal eating pattern.
- Decrease fat intake. With many lower fat choices of foods available, this is getting easier. However, don't be fooled. Even low fat foods in excess quantities can lead to weight gain, and some low fat foods are high in sugar.
- Don't forbid junk food and the less healthy foods, just use them less often.
- Limit fast foods.
- Cook at home with low fat cooking techniques.
- Share meals when eating out. Pick healthier choices off the adult menu, rather than limiting their choices to the Kids Menu.
- Use more grains, soy (like tofu), and beans instead of meats.
- Use a snack plan.
- Make water the beverage of choice over juice and soda.
- Use one percent or non-fat milk. (REMEMBER: Children under two years of age are encouraged to drink whole milk to obtain the extra fat they need for brain development.)
- Encourage and find physical activities that the child enjoys.
- Limit television, computer, and video game time.
- Don't allow snacking in front of the television, or while doing homework. Studies have shown that eating in front of the television is a large factor in creating weight problems.
- **Do not use food to punish or reward children.**
- Monitor the school lunch program and encourage more packed lunches if the school lunch is not a good example.
- Seek professional help with your pediatrician or nutritionist if you are having difficulty.
- Love and appreciate your children no matter what their size.