

Childhood Nutrition & Feeding

1. Maintain a positive feeding relationship through out the growing up years.

The best plan for obesity prevention is to plan for normal eating. The child should feel relaxed and comfortable about eating and in touch with his internal cues of hunger, appetite and satiety. By maintaining a positive feeding relationship the parent will avoid over feeding at one extreme and avoid withholding food at the other extreme. Either extreme can make a child eat too much and gain weight.

2. Maintain the structure of meals and snacks.

It has been found that thinner children have more structure in their meals and snacks. Set up regular snack times and start choosing healthy foods that the child likes and will fill the child up. Regular meal times are a must.

3. Teach orderly and positive eating.

Teach the child to eat slowly and attentively. Have them sit down in a chair and relax a little. Make meal times pleasant with conversation and sharing do not use that time for scolding or airing grievances. The parent needs to model slow and attentive eating. Eating slowly gives the child time to enjoy his food and to find his internal cues for feeling full. Turn off the TV.

4. Cut down on feeding cues.

Some people are cue sensitive to food. That means that if there are food reminders to eat around, they are likely to eat more. A candy dish or a cookie jar is a trap for a cue sensitive eaters. If a child generally eats somewhere like on the floor in front of the TV than every time he sits down to watch TV this can be a cue for him to eat.

5. Keep the caloric density of food moderate.

Caloric density means the number of calories per bite in a food. Foods like french fries and candy pack quite a caloric wallop. They are high in fat or sugar. From birth babies have a preference for a sweet taste. If a child eats too much fat and sugar it can cause a weight problem as well as impair the nutritional quality.

6. Don't Feed Unnecessarily.

Comforting a child with a cookie when he hurts is unnecessary. Giving a child soft drinks is unnecessary when water will do instead.

7. Don't treat the child differently.

If the parent starts making feeding decisions based on one child's preferences that child will learn that they make the food choices in the home. Making the food/meal choices is the parent's responsibility. Do not prepare special meals for a child, they need to eat what the family is eating.

8. Encourage exercise.

The best way to increase exercise is to let the child do what comes naturally. They often prefer running to walking. Be very careful when encouraging add on exercise. It is a good idea to pick out more active forms of recreation as a family, biking and swimming rather than going to the movies. Studies showed that in children obesity increase by 2 percent per hour of TV watching per day.

9. Be a good role model.

Many parents may overlook the single most important influence on their child's food habits- their own habits. Parents who don't prepare, serve and eat carrots shouldn't be surprised when their children refuse to eat carrots. A child learns through imitation.

A parent is responsible for:

- Controlling what food comes into the house
- Making and presenting meals
- Insisting that children show up for meals
- Making mealtimes pleasant
- Teaching children how to behave at the table
- Regulating the timing and content of snacks

A parent is not responsible for:

- How much a child eats
- Whether he/she eat

Remember there is not enough structure and limits if you:

- Give child a snack whenever they want
- Let child behave badly at the table
- Regularly prepare special food for child
- Let your child have juice or milk whenever they want

