

The Do's and Don'ts of Talking to Your Children About Food

Have you ever said something like:

✗ "No ice cream tonight because you didn't do your homework."

OR

✗ "Since you behaved yourself at the store you can have a 2nd piece of cake."

Don't use food as a reward or punishment. Instead congratulate your children when they make healthy choices.

Instead say:

✓ "I'm so proud of you! Good job finishing your homework and for behaving yourself at the store today. Let's go to the park and have some fun."

OR

✓ "I heard you and your team went out for sandwiches after the game instead of to that greasy burger place. That was such a smart idea!"



Have you ever said something like:

✗ "Those potato chips are going straight to your hips."

OR

✗ "You're just like your grandfather. Being heavy is in your genes. There's nothing you can do about it."

Don't use weight to embarrass or put down your child. Let them know what they can do to improve their health.

Instead say:

✓ "We can work on this together. Let's pick one activity we can do, like taking a walk to the park after dinner. What would you like to do?"

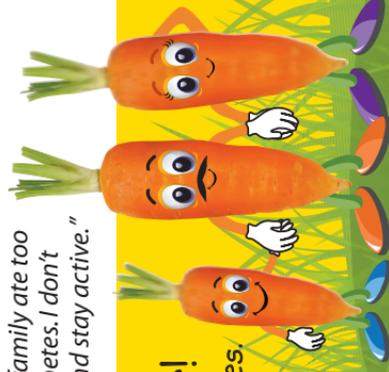
OR

✓ "I'm so proud of you for picking the right foods today. You passed on the potato chips and ate the apple instead. Maybe tomorrow we can all drink water with dinner instead of soda and juice. How does that sound?"

Your words are powerful, even if sometimes you think your children are not listening. How you talk about food and weight can make all the difference.

Be clear about what you believe and what you expect from your children.

- "When you're healthy, you can do so much in life."
- "When I look back at my childhood, I see that my family ate too much of the wrong foods, and Uncle Joe got diabetes. I don't want that to happen to us. We can eat healthy and stay active."



Remember, you have the power!

You and your family can make healthy choices.



Don't let these be the missing ingredients in your child's well-being

Eating Well and Staying Active:

Adults and children are eating more calories and fat than ever before. Weight gain occurs when you eat more calories than you burn off with exercise. It is a balancing act between what you eat (the calories you take in) and what you do (how much physical activity you get).

You have the power!
You can make healthy choices. Help your children.



1. Drink water instead of sugary drinks like soda, juice, and sweetened teas and coffees.
2. Eat smaller portions.
3. Move more and watch less TV.

Are your children “pouring on the pounds”?

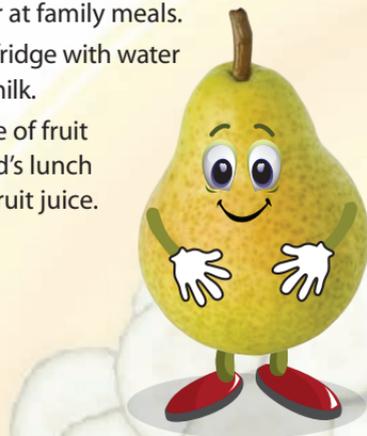
The average American eats and drinks too much sugar (82 grams) every day.

Soda and sweetened fruit juice drinks are just flavored sugar water.

Did you know there are about 17 teaspoons of sugar in every 20-ounce bottle of soda? Drinking one sugar-sweetened beverage every day for one year can cause a 15-pound weight gain.

Try these suggestions:

- Serve water at family meals.
- Stock your fridge with water or fat-free milk.
- Pack a piece of fruit in your child’s lunch instead of fruit juice.



How much should your children eat?

Portion sizes keep growing in the U.S. Plates are bigger and piled higher with food.

Most plates are 9 inches across, but a 7-inch plate is a better size for young children and pre-teens. They don’t need as much food.

Try these suggestions:

- Serve smaller portions to younger children than to older ones.
- Choose small – not supersized – portions when you eat in a restaurant. If the portion is large, share with a family member or friend, or ask for half to be wrapped up to take home.
- If your child feels hungry after eating, wait 20 minutes before serving more food. Usually this is enough time for kids to feel full.

Try saying: “Let’s slow down a bit – give your food some time to get down to your stomach, and then if you’re still hungry you can have a piece of fruit for a snack.”

Is TV making our children fat?

Watching TV requires no movement – and moving burns the calories you and your family eat. Eating in front of the TV is an especially big problem. Don’t allow it. When children watch TV, they’re not paying attention to how much they’re eating, and they’re not paying attention to when they feel full. So they keep eating without thinking. TV commercials that advertise food don’t help either.

Try these suggestions:

- Take the time to sit together and eat as a family.
- Encourage dancing to your children’s favorite songs.
- Go for a walk or play basketball after dinner.
- Get off the subway or bus one stop early with your children and walk the rest of the way.
- Have your children help with the housework. Vacuuming to music can be lots of fun!

