



Helping Your Child Stay Healthy

Nutrition and exercise habits for your growing child

Start Early and Stay Engaged

Nearly one-third of all children and teens in the U.S. are considered obese, mostly because of poor diets and inactive lifestyles. But there are things you can do to help your child eat healthier and stay active. Kids with healthy habits feel better about themselves, have more energy, are more attentive and do better in school.

Help Your Child Eat and Drink Healthy

- When cooking and buying food for your child, keep an eye on food labels. Specifically look for whole wheat, brown rice or whole oats as the first ingredient.
- Serve dark green vegetables (like spinach, broccoli and kale) and orange vegetables (like carrots, sweet potatoes and pumpkin). And choose lean cuts of meat and poultry - baked, broiled or grilled rather than fried.
- Follow the right portion guidelines as your child grows older.
- Help your child avoid sugary and sweetened drinks such as fruit juice, soda and sports drinks. Water and low-fat milk are the best choices to stay hydrated and healthy.
- Help your child eat breakfast every day. This can be as simple as whole grain toast with peanut butter, fruit and low-fat milk. Other healthy options include instant oatmeal, yogurt, eggs, English muffins and rice bowls.

Food Group	Grains	Vegetables	Fruits	Dairy	Protein
Daily Amounts Ages 4-8	4 - 6 oz	1½ - 2½ cups	1 - 2 cups	2½ cups	3 - 5½ oz
Daily Amounts Ages 9-12	5 - 8 oz	1½ - 3 cups	1½ - 2 cups	3 cups	4 - 6 oz
Portion Size	1 oz grains counts as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 slice bread • ½ cup hot cereal, rice or pasta • ¾ cup cold cereal • 4" pancake or waffle 	1 cup counts as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 cup raw, cooked or canned veggies • 2 cups leafy salad greens 	1 cup counts as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ½ cup diced • ¼ cup dried • 1 fresh 	1 cup counts as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 cup milk • 1 oz cheese • 4-6 oz yogurt 	1 oz protein counts as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 oz meat/poultry/fish • ½ cup beans • 2 tbsp peanut butter



Help Your Child Stay Active

Exercise is a vital part of a healthy lifestyle for adults, teens and children. Help your child pick up good exercise habits early on that will continue as a teenager and adult.

Older children (ages 6-12) should do 60 minutes or more of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily. This should include a mix of aerobic activity, muscle strengthening and bone strengthening. It's important to provide young people opportunities and encourage them to participate in physical activities that are age-appropriate, enjoyable and offer variety.

- Aerobic activities help exercise large muscles for a sustained amount of time and increase cardiorespiratory fitness. These include walking, running, jumping rope, swimming, dancing and bicycling.
- Muscle-strengthening activities increase the amount of work muscles usually perform. These can include simple activities like household chores and playing on playground equipment. Children usually don't need structured activities like weight lifting, but these programs are safe if properly prescribed and supervised.
- Bone-strengthening activities increase the amount of force on bones to help them grow. These include impact activities like running, baseball, basketball and tennis. Bone-strengthening activities can also be aerobic and muscle strengthening.

Here's an example of how 60 minutes of activity could fit in an older child's day:

10 minutes	30 minutes	10 minutes	10 minutes
Walking or biking to a friend's house	Playing basketball	Walking or biking home	Walking the dog

These recommendations vary based on your child's age, height, weight and level of physical activity. For more information visit ChooseMyPlate.gov.



What You Can Do as a Parent

To help your child learn to be healthy, set the right example and be a role model.

Eat breakfast, demonstrate good sleep habits and don't talk negatively about your own body.

Don't use tobacco products.

Be active as a family. Walk your dog together, go on hikes or bike rides.

Get your child involved. Younger children can do simple tasks like washing fruits and vegetables, etc. Older children can help meal plan and grocery shop.

You can also find more information about helping your teen stay healthy at [HHS.gov](https://www.hhs.gov) and [KidsHealth.org](https://www.kidshealth.org).