



## Child Obesity Management, Education & Research Program

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### A is for Actions and Altogether ahead we look

This is where you and your family decide the time is right to do something together for the whole family to change your lives and start a healthy and active journey to better long-term health.

How to want to change? This is the difficult part.

Do you recognise that your child or other family members have a weight problem?

[CDC Body Mass Index Calculator](#)

Also here are 10 Practical Tips from Dr. William Dietz for changing your lives and parenting a child or adolescent who is overweight ([download pdf file](#)).

#### DR. DIETZ'S PARENTING PRESCRIPTIONS

Dr. William Dietz is the Director of the Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the USA. According to Dr. David Ludwig, Director of the Optimal Weight for Living (OWL) Program at Boston Children's Hospital in USA, and author of "Ending the Food Fight\*", that when it comes to childhood obesity, no one deserves the title "Father of the Field" more than Dr. Dietz. Here Dr. Dietz offers 10 tips of advice for parents.

- Parents need to parent.** Food-related responsibilities in families should go like this "parents are in charge of what foods are offered at home, and children can choose to eat it or not. If a child rejects the food, it is not the parents' responsibility to offer something else, because this gives the child undue authority. Although some parents may worry that the child will be hungry later on, he will not starve. Children need to learn that the consequence of not eating what is offered is hunger, and hunger is a powerful motivator."
- Your eyes may be larger than their stomachs.** Parents often overestimate how much food a child needs. They serve a large portion and expect the child to clean her plate. A better approach is to start with a small portion and let the child ask for more.
- Keep junk food outside the house.** Keeping junk food outside the house helps you avoid conflicts with your child around food. If the food is in the house and is denied, it becomes a forbidden fruit that is extremely difficult to resist.
- Done. mix mealtime with TV time.** Mealtime is family time, a chance to come together, share news and interact. It's harder to have a meaningful conversation when the TV is buzzing in the background. Watching TV during meals also may lead to overeating, especially by people who are already overweight.
- Don't justify new rules regarding food.** When changing the household rules to support an overweight child, many parents feel the need to explain why to the whole family. This creates two problems. It stigmatises the overweight child, and it creates a perception that that because one child is overweight, everyone else has to suffer. Parents can simply say that the family is going to be eating healthier from now on and state the new rules.
- No means no.** Sometimes when a child asks for an ice cream, the parents initially says no. The child nags and nags, and eventually the parent gives in. This teaches children that they can get what they want by nagging. If you have trouble saying no, buffer yourself: "If you ask me again", you'll have to take a time-out. You can also set a limit on how many times a child is allowed to make a request.
- Stay involved as kids get older.** It becomes harder to direct your child toward healthy habits as he or she gets older, but it's not impossible. Many parents don't even try to influence their teenagers' food choices out of mistaken belief that they have no influence at all. Staying involved can make a difference. Talk to your child about which foods to choose at school, and become involved in what her school serves.
- Change your approach with teens.** You may have to explain and negotiate a bit more with adolescents when setting rules around food. This is normal, but it doesn't mean that the rules have to change. For example, if you don't want your teen to have sugar-sweetened beverages, keep them out of the house. However, recognise that teens can do what they want with their own money.
- Strategise with teens.** Adolescent can be very sensitive about their efforts to manage their weight, especially when going out with friends. You can help your adolescent develop strategies to use when he or she is at the mall, for instance, and everyone orders a burger, fries and a soft drink. Rehearse various scenarios, such as ordering the smallest serving size and having a no-calorie drink.
- Support activity.** Encourage your child to become more physically active by finding activities he or she enjoys. Some children thrive on the camaraderie of team sports, whereas others prefer more solitary activities such as yoga, dance, or karate. Some kids enjoy structured programs, and others do not. Whatever your child enjoys, provide her with opportunities to be active.

\* David S. Ludwig, "Ending the Food Fight: Guide Your Child to a Healthy Weight in a Fast Food/Fake Food World". Houghton Mifflin Co, Boston 2007.

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