

Healthy Eating - How to Make Healthy Changes in Your Child's Diet



Your Care Instructions

You have made a great decision to start changing what your child eats. Healthy eating can help your child feel good, stay at a healthy weight, and have lots of energy for school and play. In fact, healthy eating can help your whole family live better. Childhood is the best time to learn the healthy habits that can last a lifetime.

Healthy eating involves eating lots of fruits and vegetables, lean meats, nonfat and low-fat dairy products, and whole grains. It also means limiting sweet liquids (such as soda, fruit juices, and sport drinks), fat, sugar, and highly processed foods.

You have probably thought about some changes you want to make right away. Think about some of the things—parties, eating out, temptations—that might get in the way of your success.

What can you do to help your child eat well?

Share the responsibility. You decide when, where, and what the family eats. Your child chooses how much, whether, and what to eat from the options you provide. Otherwise, power struggles can create eating problems.

You can use some or all of the ideas below to get started. Add to this list whatever works for your family.

First steps

- Make small changes over time.
 - Serve portions of food that are appropriate for the age of your child.
 - Encourage children to drink water when they are thirsty.

- Offer lots of vegetables and fruits every day. For example, add some fruit to your child's morning cereal, and include carrot sticks in your child's lunch.
- Set up a regular snack and meal schedule. Most children do well with three meals and two or three snacks a day. When your child's body is used to a schedule, hunger and appetite are more regular.
- Have your child eat a healthy breakfast. If you are in a hurry, try cereal with milk and fruit, nonfat or low-fat yogurt, or whole-grain toast.
- Eat as a family as often as possible. Keep family meals pleasant and positive.
- Keep healthy snacks that your child likes within easy reach.
- Be a good role model. Let your child see you eat the food that you want them to eat. When you eat out, order salad instead of fries for your side dish.

Next steps

- When trying a new food at a meal, be sure to include a food that your child likes. Do not give up on offering new foods. Children may need many tries before they accept a new food.
- Try not to manage your child's eating with comments such as "Clean your plate" or "One more bite." Children have the ability to tell when they are full. If children ignore these internal signals, they will not be able to know when to stop eating.
- Make fast food an occasional event. When you order, do not "supersize."
- Do not use food as a reward for success in school or sports.
- Talk to your child about their health, activity level, and other healthy lifestyle choices. Do not refer to your child's weight. How you talk about your child's body has a big impact on their self-image.

Follow-up care is a key part of your child's treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if your child is having problems. It's also a good idea to know your child's test results and keep a list of the medicines your child takes.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/PatientEd>

Enter **Q952** in the search box to learn more about **"Healthy Eating - How to Make Healthy Changes in Your Child's Diet"**.

©2006-2022 Healthwise, Incorporated.

This care instruction is for use with your licensed healthcare professional. If you have questions about a medical condition or this instruction, always ask your healthcare professional. Healthwise, Incorporated disclaims any warranty or liability for your use of this information.