



**Message for Parents:** *Being overweight is a problem for anyone, but especially hard for children. However, weight-related health problems such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and stress on the heart and joints can be prevented. Follow these tips to help your child stay at a healthy weight and join us in our commitment to promote healthful eating and physical activity for all children in San Diego County.*

— Coalition on Children and Weight, San Diego • [www.ccwsd.org](http://www.ccwsd.org)

## Love and Accept Your Child

- Comfort hard times with love and attention—not food.
- Talk with your child every day and be supportive of his or her feelings.
- Reward children with non-food “treats” such as stickers, special outings with you, books, etc.

## Be a Good Role Model

- Show your child that healthy eating and physical activity are important by taking care of yourself too.
- Focus on improving your whole family’s health—don’t single out a child.
- Be positive! Talk about how good food and physical activity give you energy to play, learn and stay healthy.
- Learn together and be patient. Achieving better health is a process!
- Become the family health expert. Learn to check labels for bad fats (trans fat and partially-hydrogenated oils), sugar content, calories and serving sizes.

## Enjoy Regular Meals as a Family

- Sit together at mealtimes and talk about your day.
- Turn off the TV during mealtimes.
- Serve your child small amounts, and let him or her ask for more. Encourage your child to eat when hungry and stop when full.
- Enlist your child’s help in meal preparation—kids are more likely to try new things if they participate in making them.
- Offer more fresh fruit, vegetables, whole grains, beans, and lean meats at mealtimes and keep reintroducing new foods.
- Save treats like cookies, candy, and ice cream for special times only.
- Plan ahead and shop from a list of items you know are good choices for your family to avoid filling up on fast food and unhealthy snacks.
- Have quick and healthy snacks at home. Cut up fruits and vegetables ahead of time.
- Serve water or low-fat milk with meals instead of soda and juice. Whole milk should only be served to children under 2 years of age.

### Eating Out

Many families rely on restaurants and fast food for many meals. Limit eating out or try these healthier meal choices:

- Have milk, water, or 100% juice instead of soda.
- Choose baked or broiled meats instead of fried items.
- Order the children's meals that have smaller portions.
- Share a combo or "super-sized" meal.
- Share a dessert or skip altogether.
- Request healthier side dishes such as steamed vegetables or fruit.

### Get the Whole Family Moving

- Involve the whole family in physical activity and make it fun!
- Play with balls, Frisbees, jump ropes and kites.
- Walk, swim, skate, bicycle and hike.
- Find out if there is an affordable family gym or activity class in your neighborhood.
- Dance to music.
- Borrow an exercise video from the library.
- Use local parks, recreation centers and playgrounds.
- Walk after meals.
- Join a sports team or a walking group.
- Aim to be physically active every day for a total of 60 minutes.
- Talk with your children's teachers and day care providers to encourage active play.
- Limit screen time (TV, video games, computer) to no more than 1–2 hours a day and avoid screen time altogether for children under the age of 2.

