

healthy weight for my child

Children come in different shapes and sizes and grow at different rates.

Your child may be taller and heavier or shorter and lighter than other children of the same age, and this can be perfectly normal. Their size is influenced by your size and the size of their grandparents. The amount of food they eat and how active they are can also influence their size and weight.

Some children tend to be bigger than other children, but if they eat healthy and are active this could be the right size for them. Only when your child is overweight and has an unhealthy lifestyle is it not good.



The Best Way To Know If Your Child Has A Healthy Weight Is To Check With Her Doctor and Dietitian.

If the doctor says your child is too heavy for her size and that she is overweight because she has an unhealthy diet and is not active, you should ask her doctor for advice.

Children who are overweight and have an unhealthy lifestyle usually have these problems:

- high blood pressure
- type 2 diabetes
- asthma
- problems with walking and running
- bullied and teased by their peers
- difficulty with making friends
- low self-esteem and poor body-image
- trouble sleeping
- depression

Obesity can often be prevented.

When your children have a healthy lifestyle, they have a lower chance of becoming overweight. These are some of the things you can do to make sure your children have a healthy lifestyle:

- Offer healthy foods such as: fruits, vegetables, whole grains, different types of meats, milk and other dairy foods everyday during regular meals and snack times.
- Encourage your child to eat only when she's hungry and to stop when she's full.
- Encourage her to eat slowly so her body will have time to feel satisfied.
- Limit the amount of fast food and soft drinks at home and when eating out.
- Encourage children to be active for at least 60 minutes everyday.
- Limit everybody's TV and computer time to 1 or 2 hours per day.
- Encourage your children to love their bodies no matter what size they are and tell them that there is no such thing as an ideal body. Every body is a good body.



**Make sure your children eat healthy foods and are active.
Focus on their health and not on their weight!**

In order to help your children maintain a healthy weight, these are some actions you should AVOID

- Limiting the amount of food they eat and do not force them to clean their plate. When allowed, children will usually eat the right amount of food for them. If you try to control their food intake, they may not be able to do it on their own anymore.
- Using food as a reward or punishment. This will make food seem more important than it is.
- Sending a negative message to your child about her body or your own. Do not tell her it is too fat or too thin. Help your children feel good about themselves. A lot of times, when young children are not happy with their bodies they may engage in unhealthy eating practices and become anorexic or bulimic, and this is very dangerous for their health.



Encourage your children to feel good about their own bodies and to accept the different body types of others.

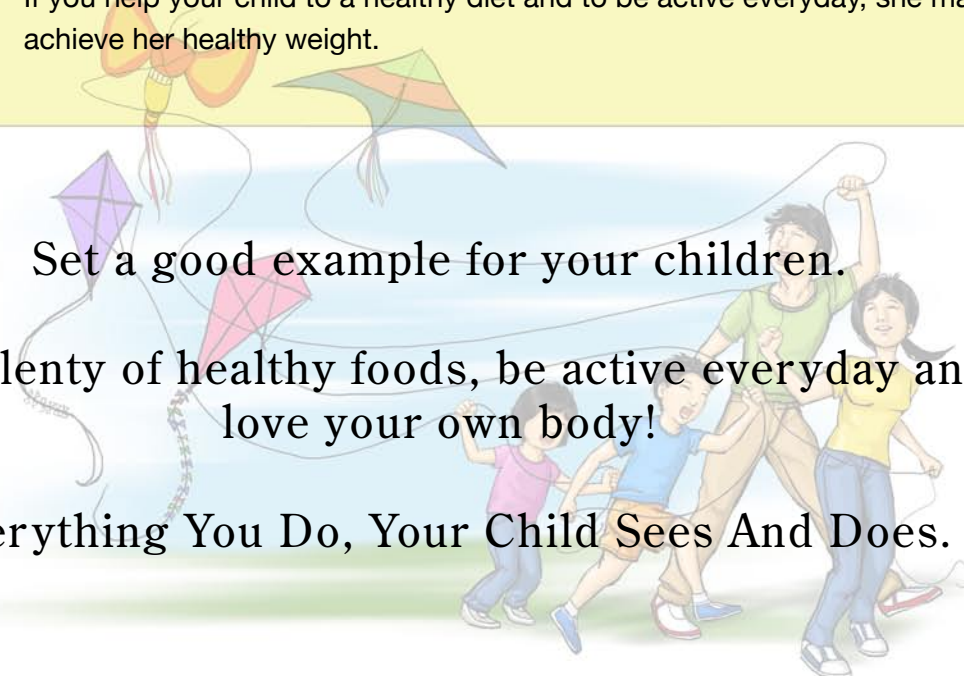
If your child is overweight, what can you do?

- Love and accept your child at any weight.
- Listen to your child's concerns about her weight. She needs support, understanding, and encouragement from you.
- Do not serve her special foods. Get the whole family involved in healthy eating and physical activity. This will motivate your child and won't make her feel singled out or punished for being overweight.
- Do not put your child on a low calorie diet unless recommended by her health care provider. If children do not eat enough, they may not grow in height and may not get all the vitamins and minerals they need. They also may not learn as well as they could.
- Be positive about the weight issue. Explain to her that each person has a unique body and it is ok to be big, as long as she is healthy.
- If you help your child to a healthy diet and to be active everyday, she may achieve her healthy weight.

Set a good example for your children.

Eat plenty of healthy foods, be active everyday and love your own body!

Everything You Do, Your Child Sees And Does.



talk & listen

to your children

Children's bodies go through many changes.

- When they are young, these changes happen slowly and are hardly noticeable. From age 10 to 14 years, however, these changes start happening quickly and children begin to wonder about them. They may not understand what is happening and worry that there is something wrong with their bodies.
- Children can also feel a lot of pressure to have thin and “perfect” bodies because that is what they see on TV, in movies, commercials and magazines. They think that they must be very thin and strong like the models and movie stars they see in order to be beautiful; this may cause them to become very insecure with their own bodies.

You can help your children to like their bodies and to feel good about themselves.

- Reassure your children that these bodily changes are normal and that everyone goes through them.
- Show them constantly that they are loved and cherished regardless of their size and shape.

Ask your children some of these questions and talk to them about body image and self-esteem.



What do you think about the very thin models and movie stars that appear on TV and in the movies? How do you feel about their bodies?

Tell them that these people only represent one type of beauty. They do not have to be like these people to be beautiful. Also, many times these people must eat very little and over-exercise to have these bodies which can be bad for their health. Explain to them that it is good to have role models, but they should also look for role models of all sizes within their own families and neighborhoods instead of in magazines and movies.



Do you think an overweight person is unhealthy and a thin person is always healthy?

Health doesn't have to do with a person's weight; it has to do with a person's lifestyle. Some people are bigger than others because this is their normal, healthy size. They can be very healthy because they eat lots of healthy foods and are active everyday. There are also many thin people who don't watch what they eat and do not exercise at all. These people have a much greater chances of having health problems.



Do you know anyone at school who is overweight? What do you think of him/her?

No one should be judged, teased, bullied or called names because of their size, appearance or color. People should be valued for their character, moral values, kindness and the way they treat others. How people act is more important than how they look. Encourage your children to speak up when anyone tries to make fun of other people's physical characteristics.