

Helpful Tips for Reducing Your Child's BMI

- Focus on reinforcing healthy habits, and don't use body shape/size or the word "fat" to discuss these concerns.
- Be a good role model for your children. Model healthy food choices and routine physical activity. Children live what they see, not what they are told.
- Encourage healthy eating patterns by offering nutritious snacks, such as vegetables, fruits, low-fat dairy foods, and whole grains. Encourage children's AUTONOMY in self-regulation of food intake. Teach children early to "listen to their bodies" and eat when they are hungry and stop when they are full. Food should be for providing nutrition to their growing bodies, not used as a reward for good behavior. Celebrate by doing a family activity together (ice skating, biking, snowball fight, swimming), NOT by having ice cream sundaes!
- Limit screen time to a MAXIMUM of two hours per day. This includes TV viewing, computer time and video game time combined. Do NOT put a TV in the bedroom. There is a strong correlation between TVs in bedrooms and obesity.
- Set a house rule that all eating happens in the kitchen or dining room. "Mindless" eating in front of the TV or computer has shown to contribute significantly to the total number of calories consumed in a day. If you are hungry, give your body the attention it deserves by paying attention to what you are eating while you do it. In addition, eat SLOWLY. It takes about 20 minutes for the signal to get from your stomach to your brain to tell you that you feel full.
- Set a house rule that no foods should be eaten directly out of the container. Start early teaching your children what constitutes a reasonable portion size. Studies have shown that, on average, a person eats FOUR TIMES the amount of potato chips if they eat them directly out of the bag instead of putting a portion size on a plate. If you aren't sure how to make the portion sizes reasonable, buy individual portion bags.
- Eat out thoughtfully. Foods prepared in restaurants tend to be higher in fat, salt and calories than similar meals prepared at home. Limit the number of times you eat out during the week, and when possible pick a restaurant that offers reasonably healthy alternatives. If you know that you will be headed to a fast food restaurant to get a quick dinner, plan ahead. Resist the temptation to "super size" and plan relatively healthy choices (choose milk or water instead of soda or split the fries among a few family members.)
- Make physical activity a regular part of your family's day. Rake leaves together, shovel snow, go on walks around the lake, take a bike ride, or shoot hoops in the driveway. When you go shopping, park at the farthest spot away from the store instead of driving around the parking lot looking for the closest space. Take the stairs instead of the elevator.