



What is obesity?

How do you tell if your child is overweight?

Six-year-old Carlos is tall for his age. Although somewhat “stocky,” he doesn’t appear to be overweight. His friend Luke is a head shorter than Carlos but far rounder. Which child is at risk for childhood obesity? Actually, both may be.

Studies estimate that as many as 30% of children in our two counties today are overweight or at risk for being overweight. But it’s not always easy to tell at a glance. Your child’s physician can help you to determine whether your child is at risk for or already overweight.

Tips for Healthy Eating



What You Can Do:

- Eat most of your meals at home - eating out usually means larger portions, more calories and fat, fewer fruits and veggies, whole grains, low fat dairy products and less fiber. Limit fast food to once a week.
- Eat at the table and not in front of the TV, and eat about the same time each day.
- Use smaller, breakfast sized plates at all meals.
- Serve healthy foods in fun ways—on skewers perhaps or make peanut butter toast with raisin smiles!
- Purchase cool water bottles for each family member to enjoy water from and refill throughout the day.
- Most folks over 2 years of age should drink 2% fat milk or less. Move your family to fat free/skim milk slowly by buying ½ gallon whole or 2% milk and mixing it with ½ gallon 1% milk. After a few weeks, serve a mixture of ½ gallon 1% milk and ½ gallon skim milk. Then after a couple of weeks, offer skim only.
- Provide all family members opportunities for physical activity - at least 30 minutes per day for adults and at least 1 hour per day for children.
- Make sure you have different colors on your plate each time you eat, even at breakfast. Canned peaches packed in own juice, watermelon, grapes, or a half banana are all good choices.
- Use the “Plate” method as you choose foods for a meal, make sure ½ half of your plate holds fruits and vegetables, ¼ holds breads, rice or other starchy items, and only ¼ of the plate holds meat. This ensures that you get plenty of fruits and vegetables which include lots of vitamins and minerals but little fat and calories.

- Don’t skip meals. If you don’t enjoy traditional breakfast foods, try peanut butter sandwiches on whole grain bread, a slice of leftover veggie pizza, low fat string cheese, half a bagel and fat free flavored cream cheese.
- For healthy weights and energy, most of us need 3 meals and several snacks in a day. A snack is a little meal—some suggestions include: crackers and cheese, banana slices and peanut butter, oatmeal cookies and milk, tortilla and scrambled egg, cereal and milk, carrot sticks or broccoli ‘trees’ and fat free salad dressing, vanilla pudding or yogurt and sliced peaches or pineapple.
- Dine out wisely!!! Skip buffets; order a low fat appetizer with a salad and low fat dressing as your dinner; order from the kid’s meal list, share a meal, or put half your meal in a takeout box as soon as it arrives to keep yourself from overeating! This will also give you an appropriately sized meal for later!
- At “fast food” restaurants, **NEVER SUPERSIZE**, choose apples, mixed fruit, side salads rather than fries. Often the fries which come with combo meals are 3 or 4 servings! Choose grilled instead of fried chicken sandwiches, leave off mayo or sauces, ask for fat free salad dressings, and water or milk to drink!
- Be aware of “diet” foods—low fat doesn’t always mean low calorie—read labels!
- Clear your counters of food—spice them up with a pretty bowl or flowers.
- Make healthy foods the first you see—put a bunch of grapes or a bag of peeled carrots on the eye level shelf in the refrigerator. Place high fiber cereals or whole grain crackers on eye level shelves in cabinets.
- When traveling, take along healthy snacks for the family. If you have to get something from a gas station or vending machine, look for fig bars, pretzels, animal crackers, small packages of nuts...
- 100 calorie snack suggestions: a large apple, a cup of grapes, 3 cups of microwave popcorn, a banana, a cup of frozen or canned fruit, ¼ cup of raisins, fruit kabobs, small granola bars, light flavored yogurt, read labels—15 pretzels, goldfish, animal crackers, flavored rice cakes.
- An adult-size serving can be just too much. You should be serving a child about 1/4 to 1/3 of an adult sized portion –see Tips for New Parents for approximate serving sizes for preschool children.



Tips for Healthy Shopping and Cooking



Please remember:

- Obesity is a big problem in Nash and Edgecombe counties.
- You may not know that your child is overweight just by looking at him or her.
- Beginning a lifetime of healthy weight means we have to start early before you see the problem!
- Everyone has a role to play in preventing this serious problem.
- Becoming overweight is preventable and **SMALL STEPS ARE IMPORTANT!**

What You Can Do:

DON'T SHOP HUNGRY!

Just don't buy high fat and calorie foods—Eight vanilla wafers, 3 cups low fat popcorn, a handful of animal crackers, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup low fat ice cream, fruits and vegetables all make tasty but healthier snacks!

The number one reason people say they can't eat healthy is lack of time. So...Make a list of main and side dishes you and your family enjoy. Then once a week, plan a menu from this list so that most meals are eaten at home. Keep on hand some healthy quick meal items (fat free hotdogs, thin crust cheese pizza, soup/sandwiches, pasta/bottled sauce and salad, baby carrots, canned or frozen fruits and vegetables, etc.) so you don't feel that fast food is the only option for hurried evenings.

Read food labels—ingredients are listed in descending order—the first ingredient is the largest. Look for products with less than 5% of the daily requirement for fat, sodium, and carbohydrates, and more than 20% of vitamins, minerals, and fiber.

DAIRY PRODUCTS:

- Purchase fat free or 2% milk for individuals 2 years and over.

- Buy fat free sour cream, cream cheese, yogurts and other milk products, sauces and salad dressings. Use these to make family favorites healthier!
- Try light or fat free ice cream, compare nutrition labels for the healthiest choice!

SNACKS/BEVERAGES

- Try baked or light chips, pretzels, flavored mini rice cakes instead of regular chips and fries.
- Read the food label and make your own 100 calorie snack bags—examples: cereal, vanilla wafers, gold fish, pretzels, baby carrots, popcorn.
- Choose only 2% milk or water!!!

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

- Shop and eat your colors! The darker the colors, the better the nutritional value.
- If you buy juices, buy only 100% fruit juice and unsweetened or without added sugar.
- Fruits and vegetables that are fresh, frozen, dried, or canned without added sugar, fat, salt, breading or sauces are good choices. If you buy canned fruits, get them packed in own juice.
- Use small amounts of olive or canola oil, vinegar, salt free seasonings (Mrs. Dash), bouillon or chopped onion or herbs to season vegetables instead of fat back. If you must fry, use canola or olive oil.

MEATS

- Buy in bulk (hamburger or pork chops, for instance), divide and freeze quantities your family needs at one meal—a family of three might only need 3 or 4 chops. Cooking only the number of servings your family needs may save money.
- White meats are usually healthier choices—chicken, turkey, fish, tuna packed in water.
- **BAKE, BROIL OR GRILL!**

GRAINS

- Purchase cereals with 3 grams or more of fiber.
- At least half of the grain products you purchase should be whole grain (on the ingredient list the first ingredient will say "whole wheat" or "whole grain").

Get your church or social group to adopt healthy foods policies meaning that each time food is served there, some healthy options will be available. Examples might include water, low fat vegetable dishes, and sugar free desserts.

For more tips and ideas for living a healthier lifestyle or places to be active more with your family contact the Family First Line at the Down East Partnership for Children (252) 985-4300.