

Parents should set good example to keep kids slim, pediatrics group says

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Avoid keeping sugary, high-calorie foods in the house, and encourage being active together.

(HealthDay)—As rates of childhood obesity continue to climb in the United States, parents should embrace healthy eating habits and behaviors to help kids maintain a normal weight, a new report says.

In updated recommendations released Monday, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) described how families can help combat [childhood obesity](#) by following a well-balanced diet, getting regular exercise and limiting sedentary activities.

"It is never too early for a family to make changes that will help a child keep or achieve a [healthy weight](#)," report co-author Dr. Sandra Hassink, president of the AAP, said in an association news release. "Families can improve their eating habits in a variety of ways, but it is important for [healthy eating](#) and physical activity to be tailored to the child's

developmental stage and family characteristics."

Parents don't have to take on this responsibility alone. The AAP noted that pediatricians can help families find ways to adopt a healthier lifestyle.

"Even when families have knowledge of healthy behaviors, they may need help from pediatricians to motivate them to implement behavior changes," Dr. Stephen Daniels, chair of the AAP Committee on Nutrition, said in the news release. "Parents and other [family](#) members are strongly encouraged to adopt the same fitness and lifestyle changes as the child. Pediatricians can educate families, provide support and help them stay on track."

Here are some positive steps the AAP recommends for families:

- **Reduce sugar and calories at home.** Children will not be tempted to overindulge if sugary and high-calorie foods aren't in the kitchen. If cakes or other treats are bought for a birthday or special occasion, buy them right before the event, keep them out of sight and get rid of them afterward. High-calorie treats can also be stored in foil or hidden in the back of the pantry so they are less visible and less likely to be eaten.
- **Make healthy foods available.** Keeping water, fruits, vegetables and other low-calorie snacks out in the open on the kitchen table or front and center in the fridge will increase the chances that children will opt for these healthy options. Kids should be encouraged to eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables daily.
- **Get moving.** Cut back on the amount of time spent in front of the television. Parents may also want to consider having fewer TVs in their home. It's also a good idea to keep all electronic devices out of the kitchen and all bedrooms.

- **Promote sleep.** Children should sleep at least nine hours a night. Those who sleep less are more likely to be overweight or obese, the AAP noted. Establish a good bedtime routine to ensure kids get the sleep they need for their overall health and well-being.
- **Find group activities.** Families can have fun while working toward the recommended 60 minutes of activity daily. Playing team sports, going to a park or playground, taking a walk or bike ride, and bowling are all ways families can develop [healthy habits](#) together.

More information: The U.S. National Institutes of Health has more on [childhood obesity](#).

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