

# Six ways to helping your child to a healthy weight

February 21 2023, by Cara Murez

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Parents are role models who can teach their kids about healthy food and

exercise habits in childhood to help avoid future health problems.

"Children who are overweight are more likely to develop diabetes, experience feelings of isolation and struggle with self-esteem," said Dr. Asma Khan, a pediatrician at OSF HealthCare in Rockland, Ill.

Khan offered some tips for giving kids an early start on good health.

First, teach them about hunger and fullness cues. It's easy to eat because of boredom or sadness, but important to recognize when you're hungry or full.

"Starting healthy habits early is the best way to maintain a healthy weight," Khan said in an OSF news release.

Use child-sized plates to make it easier to gauge how much food your child needs in a meal. Half the plate should be filled with fruits and veggies. The other half should be a lean protein, such as fish, chicken or beans, and a whole grain, which might be oatmeal, whole wheat bread or brown rice.

Choose [healthy snacks](#) such as carrots and hummus, an apple or kale chips. Skip snacks that are high in sugar and fat, such as soda, juice, sports drinks, chips, cookies, candy and cupcakes, except on special occasions.

"I also tell parents to limit the junk food that comes into the house. There isn't as much temptation to eat junk food if it's not in the house," Khan said.

Get kids up and moving each day to help control their weight, but also to strengthen bones, decrease blood pressure and reduce anxiety. Even 15-minute spurts of activity make a difference, she said. This might

include dancing to videos or playing tag in the yard.

"Aim for at least 60 minutes of physical activity a day," Khan said.

Reduce [screen time](#) to two hours per day, which is the recommendation from the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.

Children shouldn't have their phones or other electronic devices in their rooms at night, Khan added.

Get kids involved in making their own healthy lifestyle choices, making the decision about which one or two changes to make first.

Let them further feel in control by taking them [grocery shopping](#) with you and letting them choose new fruits or veggies they'd like to try. Get them involved in helping to cook dinner.

Model [healthy habits](#) and an active lifestyle, so your kids can imitate you. This could include walking, biking or swimming with your [children](#).

"Make lifestyle changes together as a family. As a parent, you can't expect kids to change if you're not willing to make healthy changes," Khan noted.

**More information:** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [childhood obesity](#).

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