

How to keep your kids trim through quarantine

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(HealthDay)—A lot of kids have been pushing up the scale numbers

while home during the pandemic—and parents need to take steps to prevent the dreaded "quarantine 15," an expert says.

"During the [school year](#), most parents rely on schools to provide their [child](#) with [regular exercise](#)," said Dr. Joyce Samuel, an associate professor of pediatrics at McGovern Medical School at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth).

"Because of the ongoing situation surrounding COVID-19, it is important for parents to focus on their child's health and ensure they are getting the proper [exercise](#) and nutrition to avoid [child obesity](#)," Samuel said in a center news release.

If your [children](#) are learning remotely, she noted there are plenty of apps with videos for short, home-based workouts that usually require little or no equipment. Another option is to get outside for a daily 30-minute walk or jog.

"As long as you are maintaining social distancing and staying with members of your household, this is a safe way to get some fresh air and regular exercise," Samuel said.

Other exercise suggestions for children include: jumping rope or running to help strengthen bones; playing games like tug-of-war to strengthen muscles; aerobic activities like bike riding or walking to benefit the heart; outdoor sports; scooter riding; tag, and neighborhood scavenger hunts.

Schedule activities for children several times a week, Samuel said.

In terms of diet, provide children with meals that have both protein and produce. Frozen fruits and vegetables are a good, cheaper alternative to fresh produce, as long as there's no added sugar, syrup or salt.

Limit unhealthy drinks and snacks like chips, cookies, candy and gummies. Encourage children to drink water instead of soda, juices or sports drinks.

"As parents, we need to understand that a [healthy diet](#) and exercise provide great benefits to our children's minds and bodies," Samuel said. "Many kids are stressed right now due to all of the uncertainty surrounding COVID-19, and doing regular exercise is a great way to relieve stress and develop healthy habits at a young age."

Adequate sleep is also crucial in preventing obesity: eight to 10 hours a night for teens and nine to 12 hours a night for children ages 6 to 12. Reducing screen time can also help lower the risk of becoming overweight.

"Later bedtimes have been shown to be associated with obesity, so putting the devices away at a reasonable bedtime and getting back to a more typical sleep schedule is another way to combat obesity," Samuel said.

More information: The U.S. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion has more on how to [keep children at a healthy weight](#).

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