



Talking Health with Your Kids

It's Not About Weight: Weight is just one indicator of health and often an extremely sensitive subject for kids. Emphasize how important it is to eat right and be physically active instead of just losing pounds. You don't want to hurt their confidence or self image.

- **Set food or activity goals:** For example, stick to a plan to only have dessert twice a week or to walk 30 minutes after dinner everyday, NOT to lose a certain number of pounds.
- **Talk to your doctor:** Your doctor is a great resource when talking with your child about their weight. You can work with the doctor, a nurse or dietitian to help start the conversation. Most healthcare practitioners will be happy to help if you ask. [Tips for talking to your Child's Doctor or Nurse](#)
- **Make it positive:** Getting healthy is something to be excited about—it shouldn't seem like a punishment. Talk about how fun it will be for everyone in the family to get active and try new, healthy foods.
- **Make it a family affair:** Talk about how EVERYONE in the family is going to work together to get healthier. Children should not be the only ones making changes.
- **Make it relevant:** Explain why being healthy is important in a way that kids will understand. Kids don't care that being healthy now will prevent their risk of disease in the future--kids care about the here and now.
- **Kids are goal driven.** Physical activity will improve their performance in sports, making them run faster or swing a bat harder. Kids want to feel good: Eating healthy will give them more energy and improve their concentration in school and with their friends.
- **Keep it social:** Physical activity can be a great way to make new friends. Kids are more likely to stick with an activity if friends are involved. Encourage your kids to invite friends for active play-dates such as bike riding and touch football games.
- **Treat 'diet' like a four letter word:** Adults don't stick to diets, so why would kids? Teaching your children to eat and drink in moderation (including an occasional treat) will ensure they get the balanced meals they need.
- **Food is not a reward:** Saying you can have ice cream after you finish your carrots makes eating carrots a chore and ice cream the reward-- the exact opposite effect you were going for.
- **Just say no to 'exercise'!** Don't present being physically active as exercise-- kids may interpret that as a punishment.. Encourage everyone in your family to try different activities and find one that suits everyone. Keep it fun!
- **Take Baby Steps:** Just like kids learn how to walk slowly, that's how they should learn new habits. Don't expect dramatic change instantly.

By talking about health in an approachable way and by setting small goals that will give everyone a sense of accomplishment, your kids will start on the road towards a lifetime of healthy habits.