



# Clued Up Parents Fact Sheet

## Ways to Keep Kids at a Healthy Weight



### If your child is at a healthy weight now, you may wonder what you can do to help them maintain it.

If your child is currently overweight, you may wonder how you can help her adopt a healthier lifestyle. Well, according to experts, rigorous diets and exercise plans are not the healthy habits to be striving for. Singling out an overweight kid will just make him feel persecuted and unhappy. It also won't work.

Instead, you can help an overweight kid move toward a healthy weight in much the same way you can help a healthy-weight child maintain that weight. How? By making it easy for everyone in the family to make healthy choices and encouraging them to make those choices so consistently that they become the entire family's habits.

Making healthy choices can help an overweight kid who is still growing hold his weight steady so he can grow into his weight as he gets taller. Small healthy choices also give healthy-weight kids the habits and foundation to maintain their weight.

#### Healthy Habit 1: Choose to eat dinner as a family.

You can encourage family health by having the whole family sit down to dinner together as often as possible.

It might seem like an odd way to help with your child's weight, but experts say it can. Studies have found that family meals are associated with a healthier diet and lower rates of obesity.

Why? Experts say that social eating is good for us. Family dinners are a healthy habit that help us stay emotionally connected. Plus, when kids eat on their own -- especially plopped down in front of the TV -- they might not pay attention to their hunger level and absentmindedly overeat.

Finally, when you cook at home, you control the menu, so it's easier for everyone to eat healthy.

#### Healthy Habit 3: Don't let your child set the menu

It's potentially a disservice to your family's health to let a child's limited tastes dictate everyone's diet. If you do, you might wind up eating hot dogs and mac and cheese every night.

When you're cooking healthy meals -- filled with vegetables, fruits, whole grains, lean meats, and dairy -- your child might not like the vegetables that show up on her plate. But keep offering them anyway. Studies show that the more kids are exposed to a food, the more likely they are to try it.

When you're making a healthy entrée that your child might not like, experts recommend that you include a healthy food that she does like -- fruit, for instance -- as a side dish. That way, there's something familiar for her.

If she protests, experts suggest that you be firm: Make it clear that her choices are limited to what you've served. Resist the temptation to cave in and make her a separate meal. In time, she'll come to accept the limits that you're setting -- and will start trying some healthier foods.

Allow your child to help prepare the meal, which may encourage her to try the new fruits or veggies being introduced.