

# Giving Young Hearts Strong Starts

## Your Guide to Raising a Heart Healthy Child



**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**  
National Institutes of Health  
National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

# Giving Young Hearts Strong Starts

## Your Guide to Raising a Heart Healthy Child

*Giving Young Hearts Strong Starts*  
Your Guide to Raising a Heart Healthy Child

## Dear Parent,

Your health care provider gave you this guide to help you keep your child's heart healthy. Look at the five color-coded sections that follow, and use the information in each section to learn what you can do to give your child's heart a strong start.

## Why these five lifestyle areas?

Research shows that five lifestyle areas—healthy eating, weight, physical activity, screen time, and tobacco smoke—affect children's risk of developing heart disease.

### HEALTHY EATING:



It is recommended that children eat nutrient-rich foods that are low in fat (saturated and trans fat) and added sugar.

### Do you think there are steps you can take to help your child eat healthier?

If you answered “yes,” see pages 6–24 of this guide to help your child and your family eat a heart healthy diet.

### WEIGHT:



BMI stands for “body mass index.” BMI shows if a child has a healthy weight for his or her height.

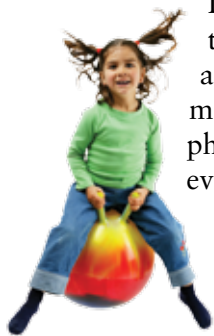
Ask your health care provider to calculate your child's BMI and to tell you if your child is underweight, has a healthy weight, or is overweight or obese. Or, you can follow the instructions on page 28 of this guide to find out your child's BMI.

### Does your child's BMI show that he or she is overweight or obese?

If you answered “yes,” read pages 25–31 to learn about eating habits that can help your child maintain a healthy weight.

Also, talk with your health care provider about whether your child should see a registered dietitian or other weight control expert.

### PHYSICAL ACTIVITY:



Doctors recommend that children have at least one hour of moderate or vigorous physical activity every day.

**Do you think your child needs to spend more time being physically active?**

If you answered “yes,” go to pages 32–36 for ideas on helping your child be more physically active.

### SCREEN TIME:



Doctors recommend that children spend no more than two hours each day watching television or using computers or video games.

They also recommend that parents keep TVs and computers out of children’s bedrooms.

**Do you think your child spends too much time in front of a TV or computer?**

If you answered “yes,” see pages 37–41 for ideas on how to cut the amount of time your child spends using TV and other media.

### TOBACCO SMOKE:



Doctors recommend that children never try smoking, not even once. It is also harmful for children to breathe in smoke from other people’s cigarettes.

**Do you still need to tell your child to never try smoking? Does your child live in a household where smoking occurs?**

If you answered “yes” to either question, see pages 42–44 to learn what experts recommend about children and cigarette smoke.

If you smoke, talk with your health care provider about getting help to quit for good.



Preventing heart disease begins in childhood—this guide can help you learn the basics for raising a strong, healthy child.

# Your Child's Heart Health Is in Your Hands

Learn about the risk factors for heart disease and the steps you can take to give your child's young heart a strong start.

## The risk for heart disease begins in childhood.

Many people think that only adults get heart disease. But while heart attacks and strokes almost always occur in adults, every parent should know that the risks for heart disease begin developing in childhood. This is why doctors and other health care providers are trying to detect, prevent, and treat heart disease risk factors in children.

More children have risk factors for heart disease than ever before. You've probably noticed the increase in the number of children who are overweight or obese, and you may know that this puts strain on their growing hearts. But did you know that more children have other health problems that you can't see, such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and diabetes? Even children who are thin or at a healthy weight can have these other health problems. If these health problems are not dealt with in childhood, they increase a child's risk of getting heart disease.

## Give your child a strong start.

The good news is that you can take steps to prevent heart disease by helping your child eat healthy food, get enough physical activity, and maintain a healthy weight and by keeping your home smoke-free. Habits that your child forms during these early years are likely to become lifelong habits. Studies show that when children enter adult life without any risk factors for heart disease, they live longer, healthier lives.





### The time to act is now.

Use this guide to learn how you can start taking steps every day to give your child's heart a strong start. This guide will help you...

- Choose a heart healthy eating plan for your child.
- Help your child maintain a healthy weight.
- Help your child be physically active.
- Limit your child's screen time.
- Keep your child smoke-free.

### Which heart healthy actions should you take right now?

This guide is filled with information and ideas of things you can do at home to help your child—and your whole family—be more heart healthy. Instead of trying to make a lot of changes right away, work on one or two of the five areas at first. You could focus just on making dietary changes for a few months. Or, you might start by increasing physical activity and cutting back on screen time. The key to success is making a few changes each week, which gives your family time to form new habits. Keep coming back to this guide to choose the next changes you will make. Little by little, you will make lots of healthy changes in all five areas. It might take you six months or more, but that's fine! Your child will continue to benefit from the changes you make for the rest of his or her life!



# Choosing a Heart Healthy Eating Plan for Your Child

*Providing your child with heart healthy foods is the most important step you can take to protect your child's heart health.*

Eating heart healthy foods can protect the heart by preventing the build-up of plaque in the arteries.

A heart healthy diet can also benefit children in other important ways, such as:

- Giving them more energy for physical activity
- Helping them keep a healthy weight
- Helping them be ready to learn at school
- Lowering their risk of type 2 diabetes

This section will help you choose the foods that make up a heart healthy diet.

## Which Foods Make Up a Heart Healthy Diet?

Use this section for tips on choosing heart healthy foods and preparing meals and snacks that will help your child have a healthy heart, a strong body, and energy to learn and grow.

In general, the best food choices are those that are low in fat and added sugar or salt, such as:

- Fruits (fresh, frozen, or canned without any added sugar)
- Vegetables (fresh, frozen, or canned without any added sauces)
- Whole grains (whole wheat or other whole grain bread, pasta, rice, crackers)
- Beans, peas, lentils, nuts, and seeds
- Seafood, lean meats, poultry, and eggs
- Fat-free and low fat dairy products

Your family doesn't have to give up their favorite foods to have a healthy diet. For each type of food (such as vegetables, dairy products, and meat), some choices are healthier than others. For example, when you give your child vegetables, the best choices are fresh or frozen vegetables. Fried vegetables, such as French fries, have a lot of calories, fat, and sodium, so it's best if your child only has those once in a while. Fat-free milk is better for your child than whole milk, which has more calories and saturated fat.

## Use the **WHOA SLOW GO** Chart to Make Healthy Food Choices

Use the **WHOA SLOW GO** chart on the next page to choose foods that are low in fat and added sugar. This chart puts common foods into groups so you will know if they have high (**WHOA**), medium (**SLOW**), or low (**GO**) amounts of fat and added sugar.



Red means **WHOA**. **WHOA** foods are the highest in fat or added sugar, and many are low in vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients your body needs. Give your child **WHOA** foods only once in a while or on special occasions. And when you do give them to your child, serve small portions. For example, fried chicken is a **WHOA** food.



Yellow means **SLOW**. **SLOW** foods are higher in fat and added sugar than **GO** foods, but better than **WHOA** foods. Serve these foods sometimes but not too often. For example, roasted chicken or turkey with skin is a **SLOW** food.



Green means **GO!** **GO** foods are the lowest in fat and added sugar. They are also good sources of vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients. Serve these foods almost any time. For example, grilled chicken salad without skin is a **GO** food.

There is a tear-out copy of this **WHOA SLOW GO** chart at the end of the guide. Put it on your refrigerator so you can easily see which foods to choose for your child and your whole family. Use it when you make your shopping list, or take it with you when you shop. You can also use the **WHOA SLOW GO** chart to teach your child how to pick healthy lunches at school.

The next section gives you more information and tips on how to choose and prepare **GO** foods for your family.



Food Group	WHOA foods <i>Once in a while</i>	SLOW foods <i>Sometimes</i>	GO foods <i>Almost anytime</i>
Vegetables	Fried potatoes like French fries or hash browns, other deep-fried vegetables	Vegetables with added fat and sauces, oven-baked French fries, avocado	All fresh, frozen, and canned vegetables without added fat and sauces
Fruits	Fruits canned in heavy syrup	100% fruit juice, fruits canned in light syrup, dried fruits	All fresh, frozen, and canned fruits (in juice)
Breads and cereals	Muffins, doughnuts, sweet rolls, crackers made with trans fats, sweetened breakfast cereals	White refined flour bread, rice, and pasta; French toast; taco shells; cornbread; biscuits; granola; waffles and pancakes	Whole-grain breads, including pita bread and tortillas; whole-grain pasta; brown rice; hot and cold unsweetened whole-grain breakfast cereals, like oatmeal.
Milk and milk products	Whole milk; full-fat American, cheddar, Colby, and Swiss cheese; cream cheese; whole-milk yogurt	2% low-fat milk, processed cheese spread	Fat-free milk, fat-free or low-fat yogurt, cheese or cottage cheese
Meats, poultry, fish, eggs, beans, and nuts	Untrimmed beef and pork, regular ground beef, fried hamburgers, ribs, bacon, fried chicken, chicken nuggets, hot dogs, lunch meats, pepperoni, sausage, fried fish and shellfish, whole eggs cooked with fat	Lean ground beef, broiled hamburgers, ham, Canadian bacon, chicken and turkey with skin, low-fat hot dogs, tuna canned in oil, peanut butter, nuts, whole eggs cooked without added fat	Trimmed beef and pork; extra lean ground beef; chicken and turkey without skin; tuna canned in water; baked, broiled, steamed, grilled fish and shellfish; beans, split peas, lentils, tofu; egg whites and egg substitutes
Sweets and snacks	Cookies and cakes, pies, cheesecake, ice cream, chocolate, candy, chips, buttered microwave popcorn	Ice milk bars, frozen fruit juice bars, low-fat or fat-free frozen yogurt and ice cream, fig bars, ginger snaps, baked chips, pretzels	Air-popped popcorn
Fats/condiments	Butter, stick margarine, lard, salt pork, gravy, regular creamy salad dressing, mayonnaise, tartar sauce, sour cream, cheese sauce, sauce, cream cheese dips	Vegetable oil, olive oil, and oil-based salad dressing; soft margarine; low-fat salad dressing; low-fat mayonnaise; low-fat sour cream	Vinegar, ketchup, mustard, fat-free salad dressing, fat-free mayonnaise, fat-free sour cream
Beverages	Whole milk, soda, sweetened iced teas and lemonade, fruit drinks with less than 100% fruit juice, sports drinks	2% low-fat milk, 100% fruit juice	Water, fat-free milk or 1% low-fat milk, unsweetened iced tea



Find the tear-out copy of this chart at the end of your guide and put it on your refrigerator.



## Focus on FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

You can't go wrong with fruits and vegetables. They provide many nutrients and fill you up without adding too many calories.

Fresh, frozen, and canned fruits and vegetables are all good choices. Frozen fruits and vegetables have as many vitamins and minerals as fresh. Purchase and serve (plain) fruits and vegetables that do not contain added saturated fat, salt, sugar, or sauce.

### Did you know?

Canned vegetables can have too much salt. Look for canned vegetables that say “no added salt” on the front of the can. Or, rinse canned beans and vegetables with cold water to lower the salt. Compare the Nutrition Facts label of products and choose the ones with the least amount of sodium.



### Tips to help your child eat more fruits and vegetables every day

- Involve your child.
  - Let your child help you shop. Children like to have a choice about what they eat. Have your child pick out his or her own fruits and vegetables at farmer's markets or at the grocery store.
  - Teach your child to prepare foods with fruits and vegetables. Have your child help tear lettuce or add vegetables to salads.
- Introduce new foods gradually. It helps to be patient because children do not always take to new foods right away.
- Cut the fruit or vegetable into tiny pieces so it is easier for your child to try small amounts at first.



## Children learn from watching their parents.

Eat fruits and vegetables in front of your child, and before you know it, your child will be eating them too.

- **Make it easy for your child to choose fruits and vegetables.**
  - Keep a bowl of washed fresh fruits on the kitchen table.
  - Put washed and cut fruits on a low shelf in your refrigerator where your child can see them.
  - Cut up vegetables and store them on a low shelf in the refrigerator. Children love to dip them in low-fat ranch dressing.
- **Teach your child to eat a rainbow of colors.** Vegetables and fruits come in all colors. Serve brightly colored vegetables such as broccoli, carrots, sliced peppers, or peas at every dinner. Make colorful fruit salads for lunch.
- **Mix them in.** For breakfast, top your child's cereal with apples, berries, or bananas. Add pre-cut or blended fresh or frozen vegetables to soups and sauces. Try mixing chopped frozen broccoli or spinach into spaghetti sauce or tossing fresh baby carrots into stews.
- **Choose fruit as a dessert or after-school snack.**



Healthy Eating

*"My daughter loves to do what I do. Sometimes she asks for a food she saw me eat, and I didn't even know she was watching me!"*





## Focus on FIBER

### What is fiber?

Fiber is a carbohydrate found in plants. It is an important part of a heart healthy diet. To make sure your child gets enough fiber, serve plenty of these foods:

- Whole-grain products
- Beans, peas, and lentils
- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Nuts and seeds

Whole-grain products should make up a large part of your child’s diet. They are a great way for your child to get more fiber. The key is to pick products that list whole grains as the *first* ingredient on the label. Try to choose whole-grain foods that contain 5 grams of fiber per serving (best) or at least 2–3 grams of fiber per serving (good). See pages 19-20 for tips on reading food labels.

### Did you know?

Fiber is good for your child’s heart. Here’s why:

- Fiber can help lower LDL (“bad”) blood cholesterol, protecting against heart disease.
- Fiber helps control blood sugar levels. It slows the absorption of sugar, which can improve blood sugar levels and protect against developing type 2 diabetes.
- Fiber can help your child maintain a healthy weight. High-fiber foods make your child feel full longer.
- Many fiber-rich foods provide a variety of vitamins and minerals.

### How much fiber do children need?

Read the Nutrition Facts label on the packaging to determine how much fiber is in the food you are choosing. The table below provides a guide for the amount of fiber children should eat each day.

Age	Fiber (grams)
1–3 years	14
4–8 years	17-20
9–13 years	
Girl:	22
Boy:	25

## Simple ways to eat more fiber

Just switching from white bread with apple juice to a piece of whole wheat bread and a fresh, whole apple adds up to 10 grams of fiber, almost half of your child's daily fiber needs.



This lunch has 11 grams of fiber.



This lunch has 1–2 grams of fiber.

## Tips to help your child eat more fiber

Need ideas for high-fiber meals and snacks? Try these suggestions:

- **Switch from white to whole grain.** Most grain products (bread, pasta, rice, crackers) have whole-grain varieties. Most stores even sell child-friendly sliced bread that looks like white bread but is made from whole wheat.
- **Bake with fiber.** Substitute whole-wheat pastry flour for half of the white flour in recipes. Try adding crushed bran cereal or unprocessed wheat bran to muffins, cakes, and cookies.
- **Serve more beans.** Beans, peas, and lentils are great-tasting, cheap sources of fiber, protein, and other nutrients.
- **Give your child fruit at every meal.** Apples, bananas, oranges, pears, and berries are good sources of fiber.
- **Snack on high-fiber foods.** Fresh and dried fruit, raw vegetables, low-fat popcorn, crunchy whole-grain crackers, and a small handful of nuts are all good high-fiber choices.
- **Go with whole fruit instead of juice.** Whole apples and oranges have a lot more fiber and fewer calories than apple or orange juice.

### Eat breakfast!

A healthy breakfast provides your child with the energy he or she needs to listen and learn in school, so make sure your child eats breakfast every day. Fiber is an especially important part of a healthy breakfast. Studies show that children may be able to perform better in school when they eat a high-fiber breakfast that provides energy for a long time. Choose your cereals wisely. Many cereals that are advertised to children are very low in fiber. Look for breakfast cereal with 5 or more grams of fiber per serving.



This cereal has 1 gram of fiber per serving.



This cereal has 10 grams of fiber per serving.



# Focus on FAT



## What is fat?

Fat is a nutrient that is found in a variety of foods. It is the most filling type of nutrient. We all need some fat in our diets, but many Americans get a lot more fat than they need.

## Know your fats.

The main kinds of fat are unsaturated fat (monounsaturated and polyunsaturated), saturated fat, and trans fat. You may have heard about “good fats” and “bad fats.” In general, unsaturated fats are good fats because they are healthier for the heart; saturated fats and trans fats are bad fats because they can increase the risk for heart disease.

## Which foods have healthy fats?

**Unsaturated fat** is found in foods such as common oils from plants (canola oil, olive oil, peanut oil, vegetable oil, flax oil), nuts (almonds, cashews, pecans, walnuts), seeds, nut/seed butters, and avocado. Fatty fish such as salmon, mackerel, and herring also contain healthy fats.

## Which foods have unhealthy fats?

**Saturated fat** is found mostly in foods from animals, including high-fat meat, poultry fat, lard, whole dairy products (butter, cream, whole milk, cheese). Saturated fat is also found in some plant foods such as coconut, coconut oil, palm oil, and palm kernel oil (often called tropical oils), and cocoa butter.

**Trans fat** is found in many prepared or packaged foods, including fried foods like French fries, potato chips, doughnuts, and baked goods like pastries, pie crusts, biscuits, pizza dough, cookies, and crackers, as well as stick margarines and shortenings. Foods that list “partially hydrogenated oil” or “shortening” on the ingredient list contain trans fat.

Give your child **GO** and **SLOW** foods that are good sources of heart healthy unsaturated fat. But, even though these are heart healthy fats, remember that they should be eaten in moderation.

## Tips to reduce the fat your child eats

### Cut fat while you shop.

- Buy plenty of foods for children to choose from— such as fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free dairy products.
- Find the fat-free and low-fat versions of items your child likes. Milk, cheese, salad dressing, and ice cream come in fat-free or low-fat forms.
- Buy high-fat **WHOA** foods only once in a while. Also, stay away from prepackaged and processed snacks. They are more expensive and usually contain more “bad” fat.

### Cut fat while you cook.

Use low-fat ingredients instead of high-fat ingredients in your recipes. Your family will probably not taste the difference. Tear



out the **WHOA SLOW GO** food substitution chart at the end of this guide; put it on your refrigerator to help you remember which foods to use as substitutions while cooking. Visit the NHLBI Healthy Eating website for healthy recipes that the entire family will enjoy: [hp2010.nhlbinet.net/healthyeating/](http://hp2010.nhlbinet.net/healthyeating/)

### Examples of High-fat WHOA Foods

- Cookies and cakes
- Pies
- Cheesecake
- Ice cream
- Chips
- Buttered microwave popcorn
- Butter
- Stick margarine
- Lard, salt pork
- Gravy
- Regular creamy salad dressing
- Mayonnaise
- Tartar sauce
- Sour cream
- Cheese sauce
- Cream sauce
- Cream cheese dips
- Hot dogs
- Regular, full-fat cheese
- Fried food

## WHOA SLOW GO Food Substitution Chart

Instead of:	Substitute:
1 cup cream	1 cup evaporated fat-free milk
1 cup butter or stick margarine	1 cup soft margarine (with no trans fats) or 1 cup vegetable oil or ½ cup butter and ½ cup applesauce (with no sugar added)
1 cup oil	½ cup oil and ½ cup applesauce (with no sugar added)
1 egg	2 egg whites or ¼ cup egg substitute
Butter or stick margarine for sautéing	Cooking spray, no-sodium chicken broth, or a small amount of olive oil or vegetable oil
Bacon	Lean turkey bacon
Ground beef	Extra lean ground beef or ground turkey breast
Sour cream	Fat-free sour cream
1 cup mayonnaise	1 cup reduced-fat or fat-free mayonnaise
1 cup whole milk	1 cup fat-free milk
1 cup cream cheese	½ cup ricotta cheese pureed with ½ cup fat-free cream cheese
Unsweetened baking chocolate (1 ounce)	3 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder plus 1 tablespoon vegetable oil or margarine
Oil and vinegar dressing with 3 parts oil to 1 part vinegar	Oil and vinegar dressing with 1 part olive oil + 1 part vinegar (preferably a flavored vinegar such as balsamic) + 1 part orange juice



A tear-out copy of this chart is at the end of this guide.



## Focus on SODIUM

### What is sodium?

Sodium is a part of salt. Almost all foods contain sodium because it adds flavor and helps preserve food. But too much sodium can increase blood pressure. Look for foods low in sodium. Buy fresh poultry, fish, and lean meat rather than canned or processed meats, and look for “low-sodium,” “lower sodium,” or “no salt added” versions of products.

## Focus on DRINKS

Your child is still growing! Giving your child fat-free milk and fortified soy beverages instead of sweetened beverages can give your child’s body a boost and help grow strong bones and teeth. Serve it plain or blended into a smoothie or shake. Water is also a very healthy choice.

### Tips to give your child the healthiest drinks

- **Add some bubbles.** Give your child sparkling water with slices of lemon, lime, cucumber, or watermelon for flavor.
- **Cut the juice.** Give your child no more than 4 to 6 ounces of 100% fruit or vegetable juice a day. While 100% juice is best, it is possible to get too much. To make the flavor of juice go farther, mix pure fruit juice with sparkling water, or mix half juice and half regular water.
- **Say “Whoa” to other drinks.** Soft drinks, sweet tea, fruit drinks, sports drinks, and energy drinks are loaded with calories from sugar and sometimes caffeine. These are not the best choices for your child.

**GO for fat-free milk**



### Why are fat-free and low-fat dairy products good for children?

This is so important! Most children are not getting enough calcium, vitamin D, or potassium. By giving your child a glass of fat-free milk with breakfast, lunch, and dinner, you can be sure your child will get enough healthy nutrients but not too many calories or too much unhealthy fat.



## Focus on ADDED SUGAR

Sugar is a natural part of some foods (like the fructose in fruit or the lactose in milk). People also add sugar to foods at the table or when the food is made in the factory (like the high-fructose corn syrup added to sweetened drinks and breakfast cereal).



If you are looking for a sweet treat to give your child, try fresh fruit or a 100% frozen fruit juice bar. Once in a while, give your child sweet treats that are low fat, such as fat-free pudding or fat-free frozen yogurt.

Most importantly, instead of sodas or other sweetened drinks, give your child fat-free milk or water.



### Did you know?

Health experts have several reasons for advising that we cut back on added sugar:

- Added sugar gives your child extra calories but no extra nutrients.
- Growing children and teens, especially girls, need to get more calcium and vitamin D, which are important for strong bones and teeth and other body functions.

Many children drink sodas and flavored fruit drinks instead of milk, and they miss out on calcium and vitamin D.

### The Scoop on Added Sugar

Sugar is sugar, even though it has lots of names. Read labels of packaged foods. Many contain a lot of sugar. Look for words like sucrose, sorbitol, syrups, glucose, fructose, mannitol, molasses, dextrose, maltose, honey, lactose, and high-fructose corn syrup. See pages 19–20 to learn more about reading food labels.





=



This soft drink has 40.5 grams of sugar, almost 10 teaspoons of sugar!

## Tips to reduce the amount of sugar your child eats

- Reduce temptation—buy fewer high-sugar items:
  - Sodas
  - Cookies
  - Cakes
  - Pies
  - Ice cream
  - Chocolate
  - Candy
- Serve sweet foods in very small portions. It helps to use small bowls or cups.
- To enhance the flavor when you cut sugar, add vanilla, cinnamon, or nutmeg.
- Serve fruit instead of cookies or ice cream for dessert.
- Toss a handful of frozen berries or sliced bananas into a low-sugar, whole-grain cereal for an easy way to add some sweetness.
- Eat fruits canned in their own juice rather than syrup.
- Cut back on products that list added sugars as an ingredient on the food label.
- Reduce sugar in recipes by one quarter to one third. If a recipe says 1 cup, use  $\frac{2}{3}$  or  $\frac{3}{4}$  cups.



## Making Healthy Food Choices— Read Labels When You Shop

Food labels provide the information parents need to make heart healthy food choices. Get in the habit of reading labels while you shop.

The Nutrition Facts label on your favorite breakfast cereal tells you it's full of vitamins and minerals. Does this mean it is healthy? No. Just because a food is high in vitamins doesn't mean it is healthy overall. What if it's also loaded with sugar? Serving your child a healthy diet means choosing lots of different kinds of foods throughout the day to get the right amount of vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients. So how do you figure all this out? Use food labels!



### Here are some tips to help you get the full story from food labels:

The first step in making food labels work for you is to read the entire label. If you focus on only one part—like calories or vitamins—you may not be getting the full story, like how much sugar or fat is in the product.

Always read the serving size amount. That's because all of the other information on the label—from calories to vitamins—tells you the amount in one serving. Notice how much one serving is (for example: 1 cup or 8 ounces). Notice how many calories are in one serving. The label will also list how many servings are in the package. Even things that seem like they'd be just one serving, such as a bottle of juice or bag of chips, may contain more than one serving.

Check out the cereal example on the next page for what you can learn from food labels.



<b>Nutrition Facts</b>		
Serving Size 1 cup (28g)		
Servings per Container about 14		
Amount Per Serving:	Cereal	with ¼ cup Skim milk
<b>Calories</b>	100	140
Calories from Fat	15	20
% Daily Value		
<b>Total Fat</b> 2g	<b>3%</b>	<b>3%</b>
Saturated Fat 0g	<b>0%</b>	<b>3%</b>
Trans Fat 0g		
Polyunsaturated Fat 0.5g		
Monounsaturated Fat 0.5g		
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 160mg	<b>7%</b>	<b>9%</b>
<b>Potassium</b> 170mg	<b>5%</b>	<b>11%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 20g	<b>7%</b>	<b>9%</b>
Dietary Fiber 3g	11%	11%
Soluble Fiber 1g		
Sugars 1g		
Other Carbohydrate 17g		
<b>Protein</b> 3g		
Protein	–	–
Vitamin A	10%	15%
Vitamin C	10%	10%
Calcium	10%	25%
Iron	45%	45%
Vitamin D	10%	25%
Thiamin	25%	30%
Riboflavin	25%	35%
Niacin	25%	25%
Vitamin B <sub>6</sub>	25%	25%
Folic Acid	50%	50%
Vitamin B <sub>12</sub>	25%	35%
Phosphorus	10%	25%
Magnesium	10%	10%
Zinc	25%	30%
<small>Amount in cereal: A serving of cereal plus skim milk. Provides 2g total fat (0.5g saturated fat, 1g monounsaturated fat). Less than 5mg cholesterol, 220mg sodium, 380mg potassium, 26g total carbohydrate (7g sugars and 8g protein).</small>		
<small>Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.</small>		

**For some nutrients—**  
**fat,**  
**sodium,**  
**and sugar**  
 —eating **less** is better.  
 For these nutrients, it is good if the Percent Daily Value (% DV) on the label is **low**; **5% or lower is best.**

**For other nutrients—**  
**fiber,**  
**vitamins,**  
**and minerals**  
 —eating **more** is better.  
 For these nutrients, it is good if the Percent Daily Value (% DV) on the label is **high**; **20% or higher is best.**

# Putting Your Healthy Food Choices Together

## What does a GO meal look like?

You've learned the basics about which foods make up a heart healthy diet. Now let's put those foods together to create balanced meals.

Pretend that your child's plate is divided into four sections. Two of those sections (or half of the plate) should be fruits and vegetables. The other half of the plate should have equal amounts of whole grain foods and lean protein foods. Just three to four ounces of fish, skinless chicken or turkey, or lean meat will do. Other options include beans, lentils, tofu, eggs, nuts, and fat-free or low-fat dairy products.



- Fill half the plate with fruits and vegetables.
- Fill one quarter of the plate with whole grains.
- Fill one quarter of the plate with protein foods.



## Did you know?

Children are more likely to have a healthy weight when families cook and eat at home, taking time to enjoy each other's company, and when children help prepare the meal.

One study found that when teenagers ate with their families more often, they were more likely to have healthier diets as adults. They ate more fruits and vegetables and drank fewer soft drinks.

It may take a little effort to bring everyone together for meals, but it's worth it, and the whole family eats better.



## Your Child's Plate

To learn more about how to fill your child's plate with healthy food choices, visit the U.S. Department of Agriculture's website at [www.ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://www.ChooseMyPlate.gov).

As you combine healthy food choices to provide meals and snacks for your child, it can also be helpful to know about **how much food** your child needs each day. Children don't need to be on a calorie-counting diet, but it helps to know *approximately* how many calories they need each day.

To get an idea of how many calories your child needs each day, see the table below. First, find the row that matches your child's sex and age. Second, decide if your child gets a low, moderate, or high level of physical activity most days of the week. To find the approximate number of calories your child needs each day, follow the row for your child's sex and age to the right to the column that matches your child's activity level.

The more active a child is, the more calories he or she needs. For example, a 5-year-old boy who is low in activity will need about 1,400 calories each day. A 9-year-old girl who is moderately active will need 1,600 to 2,000 calories each day.

### Estimated Calorie Requirements for Children

Child Sex	Child Age	Child's Current Level of Physical Activity		
		LOW Child gets light physical activity just by doing normal daily activities	MODERATE Child gets some physical activity, such as playing, including walking and running, for about 30 minutes a day	HIGH Child gets more physical activity, such as playing, including walking and running, for about 1 hour a day
Girl	2–3	1,000	1,000–1,400	1,000–1,400
	4–8	1,200	1,400–1,600	1,400–1,800
	9–13	1,600	1,600–2,000	1,800–2,200
Boy	2–3	1,000	1,000–1,400	1,000–1,400
	4–8	1,400	1,400–1,600	1,600–2,000
	9–13	1,800	1,800–2,200	2,000–2,600

Estimates are rounded to nearest 200 calories and were determined using the Institute of Medicine equation.



## Cooking with Children

There are many benefits to cooking with children. Most importantly, your child will like having home-cooked meals and be more willing to try a variety of foods. Children learn about fruits and vegetables when they prepare them to eat. And all of that mixing, mashing, and measuring makes them want to taste what they are making. It's a great trick for helping your "picky eater" try fruits and vegetables. And, of course, you get to spend quality time with your child and get healthy food on the table at the same time.

## Making Healthy Food Choices— Involve Your Child as You GO

Children can do different kitchen tasks at different ages. A preschooler can stir ingredients or tear lettuce for a salad. A school-age child can read the recipe and do the measuring and mixing. Pre-teens can learn to cut and chop safely. Children of all ages need parental supervision any time they are helping in the kitchen.



### • 2-year-olds

- Make "faces" or shapes out of pieces of fruits and vegetables
- Scrub vegetables or fruits
- Tear lettuce or greens

### • 3-year-olds

- Add ingredients
- Stir
- Spread peanut butter or other spreads
- Shake a drink in a sealed container
- Knead bread dough
- Remove husks from corn



### • 4- to 5-year-olds

- Peel some fruits and vegetables like bananas
- Peel hard boiled eggs
- Cut soft fruits with a plastic knife (only adults should use sharp knives)
- Mash soft fruits, vegetables, and beans
- Measure dry ingredients
- Measure liquids with help



### • 6- to 9-year-olds

- Cut out cookie shapes with a cookie cutter
- Crack and separate eggs

### • 10- to 11-year-olds

- Read the recipe
- Set a timer and let parent know how much time is left
- Use an electric mixer
- Grate cheese
- Stir over the stove (with adult supervision)



### Keeping it simple for the parent on the GO!

Even the busiest parents can find time to cook meals at home. Use these tips to save time and still be able to enjoy home-cooked meals. By cooking at home, you can control the amount of fat, sugar, and sodium in your food.

- **Start it in advance.** Wash and cut vegetables or make a fruit salad ahead of time. Cook lean ground beef or turkey for spaghetti sauce. Store everything in the refrigerator until ready to use.
- **Double it.** When you are making a meal, make double and freeze half for another night.
- **Mix it.** Find some recipes that include everything in one dish so you can skip the salad and sides. Pastas, casseroles, stir-fries, and soups combine protein, vegetables, and grains together in one dish.
- **Transform it.** Cook extra of one ingredient and use it in two different dishes during the week. For example, if your family likes chicken, make grilled chicken for dinner one night and use extra for chicken salad or sandwiches later in the week.
- **Slow it down.** Use a slow cooker. Prepare your ingredients the night before, throw it all in the pot the next morning, and forget about it until dinner time! There are many slow cooker cookbooks, or you can find recipes online. You can make soups, stews, roasts, chili, and even desserts in a slow cooker.
- **Speed it up.** Try grilling, stir-frying, or broiling instead of baking. You can have stir-fry ready meat and vegetables handy in your refrigerator or freezer at all times.
- **Do it all at once.** When you have time, cook several main course dishes for the week. Involve your child and make it a family project.
- **Don't cook it.** Plan a no-cook meal each week. A sandwich made with whole-grain bread, served with vegetable sticks (carrots, cucumbers), fresh fruit, and a glass of fat-free milk is a nutritious and easy meal.
- **Repeat it.** Pick a night to be leftover night. If you are creative, you can combine several leftovers into one dish, reducing waste and saving time. Or, you can serve each family member something different to use up small portions that are left over.

### Cooking at Home

When you prepare meals at home, remember to use fruits, vegetables, and high-fiber foods as ingredients. You can change recipes by using lower-fat ingredients and by reducing the amount of salt and sugar in the recipe. See the food substitution chart on page 15, and tear out the copy at the end of this guide.



# Helping Your Child Maintain a Healthy Weight

*Health experts are especially concerned about the long-term effects of too much weight gain in children. Being overweight is linked to an increased chance of getting heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and certain cancers. And overweight children are likely to become overweight adults.*

Parents who need to help a child reach a healthy weight should begin by making sure they understand how children gain extra weight. Let's look first at the **balancing act** between the food and drink we take in and our body weight.

Weight

Taking steps to help your child reach and maintain a healthy weight can lower your child's risk of heart disease, diabetes, and high blood pressure. Having a healthy weight also helps children to:

- Keep up with active friends
- Be more physically active
- Feel good about themselves
- Feel more confident at school

You can give your child these benefits by helping him or her reach or maintain a healthy weight.

Use the tips in this section to get started!





## Food and Drink—Energy for Our Bodies

### Energy In

Whenever we eat or drink something, we put ENERGY IN our bodies. The more we eat and drink, the more energy, or calories, we have.

### Energy Out

Our bodies can do two things with the energy we take in as food or drink:

**1** Use the energy by burning calories. All bodies put ENERGY OUT or “burn calories” doing basic things, like breathing and sleeping. People also burn energy working, studying, playing, being active, doing chores around the house, and doing other day-to-day activities.

**2** Store any extra energy as fat. If we don’t use the energy we take in, our bodies store the extra calories as fat. People who regularly take in more energy than their bodies use up will gradually gain weight.

So, “extra calories” are calories that we take in that our bodies don’t use up during the day. The more extra calories we eat or drink, the more our bodies have to store as fat.

### How do we balance our energy needs?

Energy balance means that all the calories from the food and drink you consume every day equals all the calories you use to keep your body going and to carry out your activities. Over time, your weight will stay the same if your ENERGY IN is the same as your ENERGY OUT. This is energy balance!





- If your ENERGY IN is usually more than your ENERGY OUT, you will gradually **gain weight**.
- If your ENERGY OUT is usually more than your ENERGY IN, you will gradually **lose weight**.

Your energy IN and OUT don't have to balance exactly every day. It's the balance over weeks and months that determines whether you can maintain a healthy weight in the long run.

### Energy Balance in Children

Energy balance is a little different in children because they are still growing, which takes energy. Even though children are growing, they can still get too much ENERGY IN, and their bodies will store the extra calories as fat. Children who have good energy balance are growing and gaining weight at a pace that is healthy and normal.

#### Extra Calories

How many extra calories does it take to start gaining weight?

It takes 3,500 extra calories to gain 1 pound of body weight.

This means that if you eat:

- 100 extra calories a day, you will gain about 1 pound a month
- 300 extra calories a day, you will gain about 3 pounds a month
- 500 extra calories a day, you will gain about 5 pounds a month



# Know Your Child's Healthy Weight

Doctors use something called “BMI,” or body mass index, to find out if children have a healthy weight. Children whose BMI is too high are overweight. BMI is calculated using a child's height and weight. This is because the same weight could be healthy for a tall 8-year-old but unhealthy for a shorter 8-year-old.

Your doctor might have already told you your child's BMI and whether or not your child's BMI is too high.

If your doctor did not tell you your child's BMI, you can find it now by using the Internet.

Many libraries have computers that people can use to get on the Internet. Just type “CDC Child and Teen BMI Calculator” into an Internet search engine to find the online calculator shown on this page. All you need to do to find out your child's current BMI is enter your child's birth date, the date you are using the calculator, and your child's sex, current height, and current weight.

## BMI Percentile Calculator for Child and Teen English Version

This calculator provides BMI and the corresponding BMI-for-age percentile on a CDC BMI-for-age growth chart. Use this calculator for children and teens, aged 2 through 19 years old. For adults, 20 years old and older, use the [Adult BMI Calculator](#).

Measuring Height and Weight Accurately At Home

The screenshot shows the "BMI Calculator for Child and Teen" interface. It includes fields for "Birth Date" (month, day, year), "Date of Measurement" (month, day, year), "Sex" (radio buttons for boy and girl), "Height, to nearest 1/8 inch" (fields for feet, inches, and fractions of an inch), and "Weight, to nearest 1/4 (.25) pound" (fields for pounds and fractions of a pound). A "Calculate" button is at the bottom.



- underweight, less than the 5<sup>th</sup> percentile
- healthy weight, 5<sup>th</sup> percentile up to the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile
- overweight, 85<sup>th</sup> to less than the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile
- obese, equal to or greater than the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile

This CDC calculator will tell you if your child's BMI means that your child is currently underweight, at a healthy weight, overweight, or obese.



## What should I do if my child's BMI shows that my child is overweight or obese?

First, by reading the other sections of this guide, you will learn many things you can do to help your child have a healthy weight. The best way to start helping any child reach a healthy weight is by following the advice in this guide to make changes to your child's eating, physical activity, and screen time habits.

- **Choose heart healthy foods for your child.** Heart healthy foods will help overweight or obese children reach a healthy weight. Children who eat lots of **GO** foods, like fruits and vegetables, and diets low in fats and added sugars will have lower ENERGY IN, and this will help them reach and keep a healthy weight.
- **Help your child be physically active.** Children need active play for at least one hour every day. The best activities are those that have children breathing hard and sweating. The more ENERGY OUT your child has on a day-to-day basis, the more easily he or she will reach and keep a healthy weight.
- **Limit your child's screen time.** Set a firm limit on how much time your child is allowed to spend watching TV or using a computer or video game player. Two hours a day is the recommended limit. Setting this limit will open up time for your child to be more active.

### Should children lose weight by cutting calories?

Experts generally do NOT put children on strict weight-loss diets. Children and adolescents are encouraged to maintain calorie balance to support normal growth and development without promoting excess weight gain. Any child who needs to lose weight by restricting calories should do so only under the guidance of a registered dietitian, pediatrician, or other health care professional.

Involve the whole family in building healthy eating, physical activity, and screen time habits. This benefits everyone and does not single out the child who is overweight.

Second, read the rest of this section to learn about some healthy eating habits that will help your child reduce ENERGY IN. These habits focus on *how* children eat, not on *what* they eat. Does your child eat three main meals each day? How often does your child eat between meals? Does your child eat large or small portions? Does your child snack while watching TV? Taking steps to change *how* your child eats is also key to helping him or her reach a healthy weight.

## Healthy Eating Habits for Your Family

### Be smart about size.

When you eat out, it's hard to find "small." "Supersize" is more common nowadays. Sometimes your plate arrives and there's enough food for two or even three people. These ever-larger portions have changed what we think of as a "normal" portion, and this affects how much food we eat at home too.



1 cup spaghetti,  
3 small meatballs =  
500 calories



2 cups spaghetti,  
3 large meatballs =  
1,020 calories



Blueberry muffin  
(1.5 oz) =  
150 calories



Blueberry muffin  
(5 oz) =  
520 calories

### Follow simple habits to eat less at home.

- **Serve less food at meals.** When large amounts of food are available, people eat more.
- **Start with a small serving.** Healthy servings are small servings, and this may be all your child needs.
- **Use small dishes and glasses.** This really works!
- **Plan regular meals and snacks.** When you plan regular meals and snacks, it's easier for your child to be satisfied with smaller portions each time.
- **Don't let your child eat out of the bag or box.** Serve a small portion and put the package away.



**Children who are overweight or obese need extra support from parents.**

- Tell your child that he or she is loved. Children's feelings about themselves are often based on how they think their parents feel about them.
- Accept your child at any weight. Children are more likely to feel good about themselves when their parents accept them.
- Listen to your child's concerns about his or her weight. Overweight children probably know better than anyone else that they have a weight problem. They need support, understanding, and encouragement from their parents.

**Eat less when eating out.**

- **Switch super-size for smart size.** If your child sometimes eats fast food, order a regular burger, small fries, and juice or milk, not the super-size meal.
- **Say “no” to combo offers.** Fast food “value” meals serve more calories, fat, and sugar than your child needs.
- **Share.** Sharing meals when eating out is a great way to save money and cut calories, too.
- **Eat half, take half home.** At restaurants, ask your server to put half of your child's meal into a “to-go” container before it is served.

**Tune in to “body messages” about hunger.**

- **Slow down the pace of eating.** Eating slowly enhances enjoyment of food and drinks and gives people time to feel that hunger has been satisfied.
- **Let your child serve himself or herself at dinner.** Teach your child to take small amounts at first and get more later if he or she is still truly hungry.
- **Allow your child to stop eating when he or she is full.** Don't make your child eat everything on his or her plate.

**Don't make food a reward for good behavior.**

Using food treats as rewards teaches children to congratulate themselves with unhealthy foods, even when they aren't hungry. Taking away favorite foods as a punishment can make children crave those foods even more. Instead, reward children with praise or a special activity.

**What if I find it hard to change how my overweight child eats?**

Many parents find it hard to change how often and how much an overweight or obese child eats. For this reason, families often want expert advice to make changes that help children reach a healthy weight. Your doctor might have already recommended that you work with a registered dietitian or other health professional. These experts often have group or one-on-one counseling sessions that give parents and children “hands on” help to change family eating habits. Ask your doctor to help you find an expert who will provide the extra support your family needs.

# Helping Your Child Be Physically Active



*Being physically active is one of the best things children can do to keep their hearts healthy. The heart, like every other muscle, gets stronger through exercise.*

Give your child the many benefits of being physically active! Physical activity is not just good for the heart. Children who get plenty of physical activity also:

- Have stronger bones and muscles
- Sleep better
- Have something fun to do instead of watching TV
- Learn teamwork and discipline playing sports
- Feel good!

Use the tips in this section to help your child be more active!

## How much physical activity does my child need?

As a parent, your goal should be to give your child at least **one hour of physical activity every day**. Aim for vigorous activity on at least three days per week—these are activities that make your child breathe hard and sweat. Jumping rope, playing basketball, running, walking fast, and dancing are good examples.

Trying to give your child one hour of moderate to vigorous physical activity on most days may seem like a lot. But doing it with your family can make it easier. Encourage every member of your family to increase daily physical activity and have fun at the same time.



**Children learn from watching their parents.**

Be physically active, and they will too! Join an exercise group or participate in a sport that you like. You'll feel better, and you'll set a great example for your child.



## Tips for helping your child be active

**Get ready to play together!** Sometimes we forget how much fun it is to play. List the physical activities you and your child enjoy or would like to try. Use your list to plan playful activities during the week. Depending on the weather, you could throw a baseball, fly a kite, walk the dog, or go up and down the slide at the park. You might also be able to play tag, play a game of basketball, or draw an old-fashioned game of hopscotch on the sidewalk.



### Outdoor Activities at Home

- Play tag
- Make an obstacle course
- Have relay races
- Invite friends over to play
- Do yard work together



### Outdoor Activities Away From Home

- Walk the dog
- Go to a park or playground
- Go on a bike ride together
- Walk around the neighborhood



### Indoor Activities

- Dance to your favorite music
- Use an exercise video





**Make a family plan to set aside time for active play.** Here are some ideas to help your family stay active:

**Remember that small amounts of physical activity add up.** Twenty minutes of activity three times a day are just as good as one hour all at once.

**Plan ahead.** Agree on a weekly activity schedule and write it on a family calendar.

**Make your family plan weatherproof.** Concerned that bad weather might get in your way? You can be active indoors. Clear some space for dancing or playing with soft foam balls. Try out a new physical activity or dance video.

**Invite your child's friends over for active play.** Plan group activities involving physically active games that your child can do with friends, like soccer or kickball.


**Choose activities that don't involve a lot of equipment,** such as walking, jumping rope, or stretching and strengthening movements. These are all activities that parents and children can do together.





**Visit a local playground or park.** Most elementary schools have playgrounds that children can use after school hours and on weekends.

**Find low-cost resources in your community.** Call the parks and recreation department to find out what sports are available and how much it costs to participate.



**Be your child's biggest fan.** You can help your child by saying positive things about active play and sports participation. Let your child know that by being active, he or she is doing something that makes you proud.

*"I'm so glad you like to run and play. It's fun, and it's one of the best ways to stay healthy."*





# Limiting Your Child's Screen Time

*Research shows that children who spend more than two hours a day watching TV are more likely to snack on unhealthy foods, miss out on physical activity, and become overweight. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that all children have no more than two hours of screen time a day and that no child has a TV in his or her bedroom.*

Start now, while your child is young, to limit the amount of time spent watching television and other media. Children who have a limit on "screen time" benefit because they:

- See fewer food ads and eat fewer unhealthy snack foods
- Have more time to be physically active
- Spend more time talking and playing with their family
- Have more time to focus on homework, reading, and other educational activities

Use the information in this section to set your own family rules about screen time; this will benefit your child for years to come.

Doctors recommend that children spend no more than two hours a day using TV, computers, and other gadgets.

## How do I limit screen time?

- 1 Teach your child what "screen time" is.
- 2 Make and enforce rules that limit your child to a healthy amount of screen time.
- 3 Find fun activities for the whole family that do not involve screen time.

The next few pages will give you some ideas about how you can take these three important steps.

## Step 1 Teach your child what "screen time" is.

Begin by telling your child what counts as screen time. Screen time includes any time spent in front of screens such as TVs, computers, and video game players. Screen time also includes time spent playing games or watching movies or videos on small media devices that children can carry with them. In a nutshell, any time spent looking at a screen is screen time.

## Did you know?

An average American child has spent 3 years in front of a screen by the time he or she is 18. Research shows that, on average, 8- to 10-year-old children in the United States spend about 4 hours watching TV, movies, and videos each day. By age 18, children who watch about 4 hours a day will spend over 26,000 hours in front of a screen. This is equal to spending 24 hours a day, every day of the year, for 3 full years! Many of our children are spending a huge part of their childhood watching TV and other screens.



## **Step 2** Make and enforce rules that limit your child to a healthy amount of screen time.

As a parent, you are in control of making and enforcing rules for how much screen time your child is allowed to have. By acting now, while your child is young, you can make real changes in how TVs and other screens are used in your home.

- **Time spent using a TV, video game, or computer should have a clear start and end time.** Children are more accepting of limits if there are start and end times.

### Tips for a clear start time:

- Have your child ask for your permission each time he or she wants to use a TV, video game, or computer.

### Tips for a clear end time:

- Tell your child what time the TV, video game, or computer will be turned off. If your child is old enough, ask your child to write the time on a piece of paper.
  - Give your child a reminder 5 minutes before TV, video game, or computer time will end.
  - When it's time for your child to stop using the TV, video game, or computer, be ready to suggest another activity. It might be helping to prepare dinner, doing homework, or playing a game. See Step 3 for more ideas.
- **Make a family rule that there are no TVs in children's bedrooms.** Putting a TV in your child's bedroom keeps your child apart from other family members and prevents you from having control over what your child is watching.

### **Do not use TV to reward or punish a child.**

This could make TV seem even more important. Focus instead on sticking to the screen time limit that you set.

### Step 3 Find fun activities for the whole family that do not involve screens.

Indoor crafts, games, and physical activities that are easy and fun are key to keeping your child from having too much screen time. These types of activities also help your child stay healthy and develop physical and creative skills. Here are some examples of activities that will entertain your child when the TV is turned off:



- **Play a board game or card game.** Keep a basket or box of three or four favorite games right next to the TV or computer. Games that are at hand and in plain view are more likely to be used.
- **Give your child some special time with YOU.** Plan ahead so that when screen time is about to end, you're ready to spend time playing with your child. Read a book together, take a walk, take some silly pictures, build a blanket fort, call a grandparent ... just have fun!
- **Plan a weekly family fun night.** Try riding bikes or going bowling with another family.

#### Be realistic.

Changing your family's screen time habits might be hard at first. Be realistic and don't give up! Try cutting back on screen time by just a half hour a day at first. As you and your child get used to less screen time, try cutting back by another half hour. By setting small goals over a few months, you will get closer and closer to the recommended two hours or less of screen time each day.

- **Involve your child in making family meals.** You will accomplish three things at once—you'll spend time together, teach your child important skills, and limit your child's TV time.
- **Make meal time family time.** Turn off the TV during family meal time. Better yet, remove the TV from the eating area if you have one there. Family meals are a good time to talk to each other.
- **Create a TV-Free Fun List.** Think of fun activities for when the TV is turned off. Use the TV-Free Fun List on the next page to get some more ideas and use the tear-out copy at the end of this guide to make your own list! Get your family involved in coming up with new ideas to add to the list. Keep your TV-Free Fun List in a handy place, like on the refrigerator.

## TV-Free Fun List

1. Make a fort inside or outside.
2. Find a bike path and go on an afternoon bike ride.
3. Play a board game or a card game.
4. Have a family picnic at a park.
5. Go on a nature walk and collect items (leaves, feathers) for a collage or for crafts.
6. Make a scrapbook with old photos.
7. Take a trip to a museum.
8. Play dress up and put on a skit.
9. Take pictures of your family and create a family tree with the photos.
10. Take a long walk with your family.
11. Do a puzzle.
12. Make a special dinner together.
13. Make your own cards and write to family members.
14. Take a special grocery store trip to buy healthy snacks.
15. Go to the library.
16. Do a household project (painting, fixing something) together.
17. Volunteer together in your community.
18. Have a dance party in the living room.
19. Plant a garden in the yard or in some containers on the porch.
20. Hang a bird feeder.
21. Play Frisbee.
22. Put on a puppet show using paper bag puppets or sock puppets.
23. \_\_\_\_\_
24. \_\_\_\_\_
25. \_\_\_\_\_
26. \_\_\_\_\_
27. \_\_\_\_\_
28. \_\_\_\_\_
29. \_\_\_\_\_



A tear-out copy of this list is at the end of this guide.







# Keeping Your Child Smoke-free



*We know that the risk of heart disease and cancer begins in childhood. Breathing in smoke from someone else's cigarettes increases children's chances of getting these diseases.*

If you or another caregiver smokes around your child, your child has a higher chance of getting heart disease and cancer later in life. Children whose parents smoke are also more likely to start smoking as they get older. As a parent, you can protect your child by talking to your child about not smoking and by keeping your child away from tobacco smoke.

Because tobacco smoke is very unhealthy, you should prevent your child from ever trying smoking and keep your child from breathing in other people's tobacco smoke. By keeping children away from tobacco, parents take a huge step toward preventing:

- Heart disease
- Tobacco-related cancers
- Respiratory illnesses, especially in younger children

Use this section to learn what all parents, including parents who smoke, can say to discourage children from trying smoking.

## For parents who smoke...

If you are a parent who smokes, talk with your doctor about getting the help you need to quit smoking. Your doctor can give you advice about nicotine patches and other nicotine replacement therapies that help smokers quit for good.

You can also get help quitting smoking by calling your state's quit line. Just make a toll-free call to 1-800-QUITNOW. If you are ready to quit when you call, you will receive free counseling from someone who specializes in helping adults quit smoking. In many states, counselors also provide free or reduced cost nicotine replacement therapies that are known to help smokers quit.

## Why should parents start talking to their children about smoking at an early age?

Parents can protect children from forming ideas about smoking that come from their friends or from the media.

Children start getting ideas about smoking at a very young age. Many of the beliefs young people have about smoking come directly from the media—especially movies, music videos, and cigarette ads. Children often start to believe that it is common for people to smoke, and that smoking will make them look cool or fit in. The sooner you start teaching your child about smoking, the less influence media and friends will have on what your child learns about smoking.

## Tips for talking to your child about smoking

It's never too early to talk to your child about the importance of not smoking. What you say to your child about smoking will depend on how old your child is. Younger children just need to know that you don't want them to ever smoke. Children in the third grade or higher might want to know more about why you don't want them to smoke. Here are some tips to help you start the conversation with your child and to keep the conversations going as your child gets older.

### Tell your child why you don't want him or her to smoke.

For children up to ages 5 or 6, keep it really simple.

*"I don't want you to smoke because it is bad for you. It can hurt your heart and lungs and I want you to stay healthy for a very long time."*

For older children, you can give more detail.

*"Starting to smoke is a big mistake. It is an addiction. That means your body gets so used to the chemicals in cigarettes that if you stop you feel really sick. That's why smokers have such a hard time quitting once they start. I don't want you to get addicted."*

### Praise your child for saying that smoking is bad.

Here's something you can say to both younger and older children when they say something negative about smoking:

*"I'm glad you don't like cigarettes. That makes me happy because I don't want you to smoke."*

*"I am so happy that I can trust you to stay away from cigarettes."*

### Send a clear message.

Children need to know that parents expect them to stay away from cigarettes. This is especially important for children in elementary and middle school. Be very specific about your expectations.

*"I expect you to stay away from cigarettes and situations where other kids are smoking and where you might be asked to smoke. I don't even want you to touch cigarettes."*



### Be honest about your own experience with smoking.

If your child asks whether you have tried cigarettes, it's important to tell him or her the truth. But point out that it was a very unsafe thing to do. If you're a smoker, admit that you made a mistake by starting to smoke and that if you had it to do over again, you'd never start.

*"I did try smoking before. I didn't know how bad it was for me. Now I know it was a very unhealthy thing to do."*

### Keep your child talking.

No matter how old your child is, it is important to encourage him or her to ask questions about smoking. Let your child know that any question is okay to ask. Be a good listener and answer your child's questions honestly. By making smoking an easy thing to talk about, you open the door now for good communication between you and your child in the years to come.

*"Thanks for asking that question. I really want to make sure that we can always talk about smoking."*

## How can you protect your child from breathing in tobacco smoke?



Do not allow smoking in the home. This may be a hard thing for some smokers to do, but keeping the smoke away protects children's heart health and at the same time teaches them that smoke is harmful and should be avoided. Here's what one smoker told his child:

*"I wish it were easier for me to quit smoking. But since I'm not able to quit right now, I've decided to smoke outside from now on. It's harder for me, but I care about you and I don't want you to be near the smoke because it is bad for your heart and lungs, and I want you to be healthy."*

Here's what one parent who made a no-smoking rule told a visitor when she explained her new rule:

*"We decided to have a 'no smoking' rule for our house. It's healthier for our kids because they won't breathe in the smoke, and it also helps keep them from wanting to try smoking later on."*

We hope that this ***Giving Young Hearts Strong Starts*** guide has helped you learn about the steps you can take to give your child's young heart a strong start! Remember that the key to success is making a few changes each week, giving your family time to form new habits. Keep coming back to this guide to choose the next changes you will make. Little by little, you will make lots of healthy changes in all five areas. It might take you six months or more, but that's fine. Your child will continue to benefit from the changes you make for the rest of his or her life!



# WHOA SLOW GO Chart

Food Group	WHOA foods <i>Once in a while</i>	SLOW foods <i>Sometimes</i>	GO foods <i>Almost anytime</i>
Vegetables	Fried potatoes like French fries or hash browns, other deep-fried vegetables	Vegetables with added fat and sauces, oven-baked French fries, avocado	All fresh, frozen, and canned vegetables without added fat and sauces
Fruits	Fruits canned in heavy syrup	100% fruit juice, fruits canned in light syrup, dried fruits	All fresh, frozen, and canned fruits (in juice)
Breads and cereals	Muffins, doughnuts, sweet rolls, crackers made with trans fats, sweetened breakfast cereals	White refined flour bread, rice, and pasta; French toast; taco shells; cornbread; biscuits; granola; waffles and pancakes	Whole-grain breads, including pita bread and tortillas; whole-grain pasta; brown rice; hot and cold unsweetened whole-grain breakfast cereals, like oatmeal.
Milk and milk products	Whole milk; full-fat American, cheddar, Colby, and Swiss cheese; cream cheese; whole-milk yogurt	2% low-fat milk, processed cheese spread	Fat-free milk, fat-free or low-fat yogurt, cheese or cottage cheese
Meats, poultry, fish, eggs, beans, and nuts	Untrimmed beef and pork, regular ground beef, fried hamburgers, ribs, bacon, fried chicken, chicken nuggets, hot dogs, lunch meats, pepperoni, sausage, fried fish and shellfish, whole eggs cooked with fat	Lean ground beef, broiled hamburgers, ham, Canadian bacon, chicken and turkey with skin, low-fat hot dogs, tuna canned in oil, peanut butter, nuts, whole eggs cooked without added fat	Trimmed beef and pork; extra lean ground beef; chicken and turkey without skin; tuna canned in water; baked, broiled, steamed, grilled fish and shellfish; beans, split peas, lentils, tofu; egg whites and egg substitutes
Sweets and snacks	Cookies and cakes, pies, cheesecake, ice cream, chocolate, candy, chips, buttered microwave popcorn	Ice milk bars, frozen fruit juice bars, low-fat or fat-free frozen yogurt and ice cream, fig bars, ginger snaps, baked chips, pretzels	Air-popped popcorn
Fats/condiments	Butter, stick margarine, lard, salt pork, gravy, regular creamy salad dressing, mayonnaise, tartar sauce, sour cream, cheese sauce, sauce, cream cheese dips	Vegetable oil, olive oil, and oil-based salad dressing; soft margarine; low-fat salad dressing; low-fat mayonnaise; low-fat sour cream	Vinegar, ketchup, mustard, fat-free salad dressing, fat-free mayonnaise, fat-free sour cream
Beverages	Whole milk, soda, sweetened iced teas and lemonade, fruit drinks with less than 100% fruit juice, sports drinks	2% low-fat milk, 100% fruit juice	Water, fat-free milk or 1% low-fat milk, unsweetened iced tea





## WHOA SLOW GO Food Substitution Chart

Instead of:	Substitute:
1 cup cream	1 cup evaporated fat-free milk
1 cup butter or stick margarine	1 cup soft margarine (with no trans fats) or 1 cup vegetable oil or ½ cup butter and ½ cup applesauce (with no sugar added)
1 cup oil	½ cup oil and ½ cup applesauce (with no sugar added)
1 egg	2 egg whites or ¼ cup egg substitute
Butter or stick margarine for sautéing	Cooking spray, no-sodium chicken broth, or a small amount of olive oil or vegetable oil
Bacon	Lean turkey bacon
Ground beef	Extra lean ground beef or ground turkey breast
Sour cream	Fat-free sour cream
1 cup mayonnaise	1 cup reduced-fat or fat-free mayonnaise
1 cup whole milk	1 cup fat-free milk
1 cup cream cheese	½ cup ricotta cheese pureed with ½ cup fat-free cream cheese
Unsweetened baking chocolate (1 ounce)	3 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder plus 1 tablespoon vegetable oil or margarine
Oil and vinegar dressing with 3 parts oil to 1 part vinegar	Oil and vinegar dressing with 1 part olive oil + 1 part vinegar (preferably a flavored vinegar such as balsamic) + 1 part orange juice

## TV-Free Fun List

1. Make a fort inside or outside.
2. Find a bike path and go on an afternoon bike ride.
3. Play a board game or a card game.
4. Have a family picnic at a park.
5. Go on a nature walk and collect items (leaves, feathers) for a collage or for crafts.
6. Make a scrapbook with old photos.
7. Take a trip to a museum.
8. Play dress up and put on a skit.
9. Take pictures of your family and create a family tree with the photos.
10. Take a long walk with your family.
11. Do a puzzle.
12. Make a special dinner together.
13. Make your own cards and write to family members.
14. Take a special grocery store trip to buy healthy snacks.
15. Go to the library.
16. Do a household project (painting, fixing something) together.
17. Volunteer together in your community.
18. Have a dance party in the living room.
19. Plant a garden in the yard or in some containers on the porch.
20. Hang a bird feeder.
21. Play Frisbee.
22. Put on a puppet show using paper bag puppets or sock puppets.
23. \_\_\_\_\_
24. \_\_\_\_\_
25. \_\_\_\_\_
26. \_\_\_\_\_
27. \_\_\_\_\_
28. \_\_\_\_\_
29. \_\_\_\_\_



### **For More Information**

The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) Health Information Center (HIC) is a service of the NHLBI of the National Institutes of Health. The NHLBI HIC provides information to health professionals patients, and the public about the treatment, diagnosis, and prevention of heart, lung, and blood diseases and sleep disorders.

For more information, contact:

NHLBI Health Information Center

P.O. Box 30105

Bethesda, MD 20824-0105

Phone: 301-592-8573

Email: [NHLBIinfo@nhlbi.nih.gov](mailto:NHLBIinfo@nhlbi.nih.gov)

Website: [www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov)

**DISCRIMINATION PROHIBITED:** Under provisions of the applicable public laws enacted by Congress since 1964, no person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, handicap, or age, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity (or, on the basis of sex, with respect to any education program and activity) receiving Federal financial assistance. In addition, Executive Order 11141 prohibits discrimination on the basis of age by contractors and subcontractors in the performance of Federal contracts, and Executive Order 11246 states that not federally funded contractor may discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. Therefore, the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute must be operated in compliance with these laws and Executive Orders.



National Heart, Lung,  
and Blood Institute