

Saint David's Health News

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Dear Parents,

In response to the alarming rise in the number of overweight children and teens in this country, the CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend that a measurement of Body Mass Index (BMI) be added to children's annual physical examinations.

This issue of *Saint David's Health News* explores ways in which parents can help their children to eat healthily and maintain a healthy weight.

The Food Committee at Saint David's has been working to ensure that the boys are served healthy snacks and lunches. Changes include switching to whole grain bread and pasta, offering fruit for dessert twice a week, and switching to 1% milk. In addition, fresh fruit, salad, low fat yogurt, and sunbutter are offered at lunchtime.

Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Happy Spring!
Annie Haddad

BODY MASS INDEX (BMI): SCREENING FOR OVERWEIGHT

www.cdc.gov

Body Mass Index (BMI) is used to screen for possible weight problems. It is determined by a calculation using your child's height and weight. Although it does not directly measure body fat, it is a reliable alternative. Unlike adult BMI, BMI for children and teenagers is both age and sex-specific. This is due to the facts that a child's amount of body fat changes with age and differs between boys and girls.

Once calculated, a percentile ranking is obtained using the CDC's *BMI-for-age growth chart* which compares your child's BMI to those of children of the same age. Your child is then assigned to one of 4 weight status categories as shown in the following table:

Weight Status Category	Percentile Range
Underweight	Less than the 5 th percentile
Healthy weight	5 th percentile to less than 85 th percentile
At risk of overweight	85 th to less than 95 th percentile
Overweight	Equal to or greater than the 95 th percentile

Bear in mind that the BMI is a screening tool, not a diagnostic tool. Further investigation, including diet, general health, and level of physical activity, must be carried out before a child can be diagnosed as overweight. Also, as muscle weighs more than fat, a muscular child may have a high BMI without being overweight.

The standard formula for calculating BMI is:

Weight (lb) / [Height x Height] x 703

A much easier way to determine your child's BMI is to enter his height and weight into one of the many available **online BMI calculators**, such as:

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/bmi/> or

<http://www.keepkidshealthy.com/welcome/bmicalculator.html>

If you are concerned that your child may be overweight, please consult with your pediatrician so that a thorough assessment can be done. This includes a discussion of your child's eating habits and his level of physical activity; as well as his overall health, age, and BMI. Your pediatrician may refer you to a registered dietician for counseling.

An overweight child is at increased risk of developing serious health problems, such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, asthma, and sleep disorders; as well as depression, isolation, and low self-esteem.

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KEEPING YOUR CHILD AT A HEALTHY WEIGHT

www.cdc.gov
www.kidshealth.org

The formula looks simple: To keep your child at a healthy weight, balance his daily caloric intake with the number of calories he expends through physical activity and normal growth. As every parent knows, however, the combination of a child's unhealthy eating habits and the stresses of daily life can sometimes make the job of providing healthy nutrition for the family nearly impossible! Here are some tips for encouraging healthy eating habits for the whole family:

- Offer a variety of healthy foods, including plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains; and low-fat milk products.
- Limit consumption of saturated fats and sugars, especially sweetened beverages and calorie-laden snacks.
- Allow your child to participate in at least 60 minutes of physical activity most days of the week.
- Restrict sedentary activities to no more than 1 hour per day, and discourage eating while watching television.
- Don't force your child to clean his plate. Better to reinforce the concept of eating only when hungry.
- Steer clear of rewarding or bribing your child with sweets.
- Allow your child to have some of his favorite snacks and sweets on occasion. Banning them completely can backfire and lead to over-indulgence.
- Set a good example: by eating healthily, maintaining a healthy weight, and engaging in frequent exercise. Family members tend to have similar eating and exercise patterns.

Here are some suggestions for healthy snacking:

- ❖ Whole-grain pretzels
- ❖ Low-fat yogurt
- ❖ Hummus on whole wheat bread
- ❖ Peanut butter or Sunbutter on whole wheat bread
- ❖ Fruit smoothies with low-fat yogurt or milk
- ❖ Mini pizza: whole grain English muffin with marinara sauce and grated cheese.
- ❖ A mix of dried fruit, chopped nuts, and low-sugar cereal
- ❖ Sliced fruit dipped in low-fat yogurt
- ❖ Low-fat microwave popcorn with spices and/or grated cheese
- ❖ Cut up veggies with low-fat dressing or hummus
- ❖ Whole wheat graham crackers

3 CHEERS FOR OMEGA-3 FATS!

Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
www.chop.edu

Adding polyunsaturated fats known as **Omega-3's** to your child's diet is one of the best ways to ensure that he will grow and develop properly. Much has been written about the beneficial effects of Omega-3's for adults. In children, Omega-3's enhance brain, blood vessel, and immune system functions. Two of the most powerful forms of Omega 3's, **DHA** and **EPA**, have been added to many products, including infant formulas, baby food, yogurt, orange juice, milk and soy milk.

Here are some ways to add Omega 3's to your child's diet:

1. Turn your child into a fish-lover! Salmon, tuna, halibut, snapper, and shrimp are excellent sources of Omega-3's.
2. Include lots of leafy green vegetables, especially kale.
3. Switch to canola, soy, and flaxseed oils.
4. Look for cereals containing added flaxseed.
5. Serve nuts such as almonds and walnuts, for snacks; and add them to salads.
6. Raw tofu and other pure proteins such as beans are very high in Omega 3's.
7. Look for food labels that read "*Excellent source of*"