

Change The Way Your Family Eats

We are bombarded daily with new fad diets, supplements and weight loss methods. There are no quick fixes or fad diets that work! When it comes to healthy eating, get educated about the facts and take an active role in helping your child make positive changes. Our goal in this article is to show you that the key to eating for health, wellbeing and weight management is to get back to the basics. Keep it simple.

Teach your children healthy eating habits the same way you would teach them about any other important issue. Have conversations about food choices, reinforce healthy eating habits and be a positive role-model. The earlier children are exposed to healthy foods, the more likely they are to eat them throughout their life. Include them in menu planning and food preparation as they will be more likely to eat the meal if they have participated in it. Teach your children to recognize and respond to hunger and fullness. Be cautious not to pressure them to finish a snack or meal if they say they are no longer hungry.

In most cases, weight control is simply about calories. The majority of adults and children who become overweight or obese do so because they consume more calories than their bodies use. If your child is overweight or at risk, there are two ways to reduce the amount of calories in their diet. 1) Encourage portion control. Your child can gain weight with healthy foods if they eat too much. 2) Emphasize foods that are lower in calories. If you don't know what is in certain foods, buy a calorie and fat counter. You can purchase one at any bookstore. The reference will break down the amount of calories, fat, type of fat, protein and nutrients for you. Our favorite is NutriBase Complete Book of Food Counts, which can be ordered at www.penguin.com. For a general estimate of your child's daily caloric needs visit: <http://www.calorie-counter.com/> For a more accurate measurement of caloric needs and a personalized calorie-based meal plan, contact Rebecca to learn more or schedule an appointment for a personalized assessment and plan.

It is important to emphasize eating for total health and wellbeing rather than focusing primarily on weight loss so as not to promote eating or body image disorders. For a complete review of recommended guidelines and portion servings visit the latest version of the [Food Pyramid](#). To simplify these guidelines:

- Eat all varieties of vegetables and fruits. They are rich in vitamins, minerals, nutrients, antioxidants, anti-inflammatory substances and fiber. They also tend to be low in calories with the exception of dried fruits which are higher in calories.
- Consume non fat and low fat dairy products, which are a great source of calcium and protein.
- Reduce refined, processed carbohydrates such as white flour, bread and white rice. These items are low in nutritional value.
- Increase nutritionally valuable carbohydrates such as whole grain breads, cereals, pastas and brown rice. These are higher in fiber and other nutrients that may satisfy you longer.
- Reduce your intake of red meat to one to two times per week.
- Choose leaner meats and low fat proteins such as poultry, seafood, fish (rich in omega 3 fatty acids) and soy products.
- Include legumes and beans for protein and fiber.
- Nuts and seeds are also an excellent source of protein but should be consumed in moderation because of their high fat and calorie content.
- Minimize saturated fat, trans-fats and items that have partially hydrogenated oil or shortening in them.
- Use poly and mono unsaturated fats such as olive, canola, safflower or flax.
- Reduce foods that are high in sugar and "empty calories" such as soda, candy, cakes, cookies and pastries.

With little effort most foods can be healthy and tasty. The key is to find things that are practical and that fit into your life. For example, find a brand of baked chips your children enjoy instead of fried ones. Try low sugar, high fiber breads. When baking or cooking consider substituting healthier ingredients for less healthy ones. Replace sugar with Splenda or use half the amount that the recipe requires; substitute applesauce or yogurt for oil or butter or use less. Utilize healthier oils when cooking or making salad dressings. Use egg whites instead of the whole egg for recipes or omelets. To help increase fruit in your diet, freeze bananas, berries, peaches or any type of fruit you like and make smoothies with skim milk or low sugar juice. You are what you eat. The more alive (i.e. fruits, vegetables and grains) and healthy the food is the more vital and healthy you will be. The options for healthy eating are endless. Be creative.

One of the biggest myths today is that carbohydrates are the culprit in weight gain. This is not true. Carbohydrates such as vegetables, fruits and whole grains provide great nutritional value and have a low to moderate number of calories. We should however cut back on low quality carbohydrates that are mainly found in prepackaged and processed foods such as cookies, baked goods, cakes, chips and some crackers because these items lack nutritional value and often contain more calories. In addition, many of these products contain trans fatty acids and partially hydrogenated oils which have been found to increase total cholesterol and decrease HDL (the “good” cholesterol). They also have high salt and sugar content, both of which are added to increase the shelf life.

If we continue to believe the anti-carbohydrate craze, we will find it has done exactly what the fat free craze of the 90’s did - contribute to the increase in our waistlines and those of our children! Remember that, when it comes to long term weight control, it is the total calories that count. You can lose weight on a chocolate diet if you eat few enough calories, but it doesn’t mean it is healthy.

If your child is overweight or at risk, it is crucial that you take action now. Your child will decrease their life expectancy by 13 years if they stay overweight. They will have an increase risk for heart disease, the number one killer of Americans. They will be at greater risk for adult onset Type 2 Diabetes, a disease which used to affect mostly adults but is now being diagnosed frequently in children. They may be negatively affected by the psychological and emotional consequences of being overweight, such as lower self-esteem, greater chances of depression and less success in the workplace.

There is so much conflicting information about how to eat for health and weight management. It is hard to know what to believe. If you get overwhelmed, keep in mind you can never go wrong with getting back to the basics. *Keep it simple!* The following resources will help you get started and educate yourself so you can educate your children.

- **Volumetrics Eating Plan: Techniques and Recipes for Feeling Full on Fewer Calories, by Barbara Rolls**
This is a wonderful book full of techniques and recipes to help you eating less calories and feel full longer
www.volumetricseatingplan.com
- **University of California Berkley’s The Wellness Kitchen**
Over 350 mouthwatering recipes designed to maximize health-giving nutrients in your diet
www.wellnessletter.com
- **The Healthy Kitchen by Andrew Weil, M.D. and Rosie Daley**
Tips, information and recipes to help you make healthy, delicious meals
www.amazon.com

About the author:

The author of this article is Kiersten K. Mooney. Kiersten is a contributing writer for the website [Six Dimensions](http://SixDimensions.com), a website devoted to a variety of wellness services.