

# 10 TIPS TO HELP YOUR CHILD & TEEN ACHIEVE A HEALTHY WEIGHT



For more information, visit the ECU Pediatric Healthy Weight Research and Treatment Center website at

[www.ecu.edu/pedsweightcenter](http://www.ecu.edu/pedsweightcenter)

1. **Be a ROLE MODEL and make healthy lifestyle changes as a family.** Eat smart and move more. Your children learn by watching you make healthy choices. Encourage healthy food choices without being overly restrictive.
2. **Sip smart by limiting sugar-sweetened drinks.** Drink water, sugar free drinks or 1%/skim milk. Limit fruit juice to less than 4 ounces per day for kids ten and under, and 6 ounces for older kids and only offer 100% fruit juice (no sugar added). Sugar-sweetened drinks like soda, sweet tea, Kool-Aid, sports drinks and sweetened coffee drinks provide little or no nutritional value and the extra calories can cause weight gain.
3. **Enjoy 5 servings of fruits and vegetables a day.** Aim to eat 2 cups of fruits and at least 3 cups of vegetables a day. They are filling with few calories, great sources of vitamins, minerals, and fiber and make great snacks. Try to include one or two at each meal and snack.
4. **Eat a healthy breakfast every day.** Eating breakfast has been shown to increase test scores, attendance, and class participation. Meal skipping often leads to over eating later in the day. Healthy choices include fruit, whole grain cereals and oatmeal, toast, yogurt, low fat milk.
5. **Aim for most meals at home instead of eating out.** Fast food is often high in fat, calories and sodium and low in fruits, vegetables and fiber. Eat family meals—goal of 5-6 times a week. Sit down to eat and turn off the TV while eating. Children and adults are more likely to eat vegetables when eating together, at home.
6. **Make a healthy plate with right-size portions.** Be aware of large portions, especially when eating out. When you order food, always choose the “kids meal,” or small or regular- sized portions. At home, make half the plate fruits and vegetables and serve age-appropriate portions size (hand/fist size) and offer seconds of vegetables only.
7. **Limit screen time to less than 2 hours a day and no TV in bedrooms.** When your child is watching TV or playing video games, they are not using up many calories and may be tempted to snack for reasons other than hunger. Encourage your child to do something active instead, brainstorm and choose from a list of activities they enjoy.
8. **Engage in 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity daily.** Get active with your child—walk, bike or play together. Encourage your child to get at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day. Let them choose activities they enjoy—they’ll be more likely to stick with it.
9. **Make sure your child gets a good night’s sleep.** Children who do not get enough sleep are more likely to be overweight. Experts recommend children 18 months- 3 years get 12-14 hours, 3-5 years 11-13 hours, 5-12 years 10-11 hours, and teens 9.25 hours per night.
10. **Reward your child with non-food items only.** Rewarding with food or “treats” sends the wrong message to kids. Give your child praise, a hug, an active toy or something they may enjoy—like a trip to their favorite park or spending time together!