

Why is it important for my child to maintain a healthy weight?

- Maintaining a healthy weight will greatly lower your child's lifetime risk of developing heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, certain cancers and so much more.
- It will help your child have more energy during the day and sleep better at night.
- It can help to improve mood and leads to overall higher quality of life.

How can I provide my child with healthy meals?

Let your plate be your guide:

Use the MyPlate model to help plan and plate out healthy meals:

- Fill one half of your child's plate with colorful non-starchy vegetables and fruits such as broccoli, tomatoes and blueberries.
- Make at least half of your grains be whole grains. Examples include whole wheat bread, brown rice, oatmeal and barley.
- Choose lean cuts of meat, poultry and fish for protein. Emphasize plant-based proteins such as lentils, beans, soy foods (example: tofu, tempeh), nuts and seeds.
- Switch to low-fat and non-fat dairy products. For dairy alternatives try unsweetened soy milk, almond milk or cashew milk.
- If they want seconds during a meal, encourage your child to choose more of the vegetable or fruit.
- Visit <http://www.choosemyplate.gov> for more information.



How can I provide my child with healthy drinks?

- Water is always a great option! Add some flavor and fun to your child's water by infusing it with fruits and vegetables such as sliced oranges, cucumber or berries.
- Milk is a wonderful source of protein and strengthens your child's bones. Switch to skim milk to still get the great benefits without the additional fat. Plant-based milks with calcium are also great options (soy milk).
- Limit the amount of sugar-sweetened beverages, sports drinks and juices.

How can eating colorful food help my child stay healthy?

- When it comes to vegetables and fruits it is best to eat a spectrum of colors! Each color will provide your child with a variety of different vitamins and minerals.
- Vegetables and fruits are also a great source of fiber which will help your child to feel full.
- Encourage your child to eat at least **5 servings** of vegetables and fruits every day.
- For more recipes and tips on how to add more vegetables and fruits into your family's diet, visit: <http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org>.

How can I help my child get active?

- Encourage your child to be active for **60 or more minutes** every day. Find moderate intensity physical activities that your child enjoys!
- Include fun family activities that promote an active lifestyle. Go for a bike ride or take a hike through the park.
- Limit the amount of time your child spends watching TV, playing video games and surfing the web to no more than 2 hours per day. By limiting screen time your child will be better able to meet their activity goals.

What else can I do to help my child eat well?

- Model healthy eating habits yourself! If you are eating well and maintaining an active lifestyle your child is more likely to do the same.
- Schedules can get hectic, but aim to eat together as a family as much as possible.
- Provide your child with structured meals and snacks. This is especially important to remember over the summer months when children have more chances to graze and eat out of boredom.
- Do you have a future “foodie”? Let them lend a helping hand with menu planning, grocery shopping and cooking.
- Aim to decrease overall consumption of saturated fat, refined carbohydrates and added sugars. Read nutrition facts labels to know what your family is eating. For more information visit: <http://michmed.org/QRK22> or search “food facts FDA” in your online search engine.

How can I learn more?

- Registered dietitian nutritionists are experts in food and nutrition. Ask your child’s primary care doctor for a referral to an ambulatory care Registered Dietitian Nutritionist.
- The Michigan Medicine Pediatric Weight Management Clinic uses a family-based behavioral approach, designed for patients 2-18 years old with a BMI (Body Mass Index) at or above the 85th percentile. To learn more or request an appointment call the clinic at (734) 615-3829.

Disclaimer: This document contains information and/or instructional materials developed Michigan Medicine for the typical patient with your condition. It may include links to online content that was not created by Michigan Medicine and for which Michigan Medicine does not assume responsibility. It does not replace medical advice from your health care provider because your experience may differ from that of the typical patient. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about this document, your condition or your treatment plan.

Author: Leah Kulhanek, RD and Chantal Singer, RD

Patient Education by [Michigan Medicine](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License](#) .Last Revised 11/2017