

Helping Your Child Make Healthy Food Choices

(8–10 Years)

Children are learning that healthy foods can have a positive effect on their health and growth. Here are answers to important questions you may have about your child's nutrition.

How can our family eat healthy meals together when we are so busy?

- Make food preparation and cooking a family activity.
- Eat different meals together. For example, eat breakfast together one day and lunch or dinner the next.
- Buy healthy ready-to-eat foods from the store or healthy take-out foods from a restaurant.



How can I get my child to eat breakfast?

- Provide foods that are fast and convenient, such as bagels, low-fat granola bars, fruits, 100% fruit juice, and yogurt.
- Serve foods other than the usual breakfast foods (for example, sandwiches, baked potatoes, and leftovers such as chicken or pasta).
- Help your child get organized so that she has time to eat in the morning.
- Make breakfast the night before.
- If your child is in a hurry, offer her foods such as fruits or trail mix to eat at school.

How can I help my child get enough calcium?

- Serve foods that are rich in calcium, such as low-fat milk, cheese, yogurt, tofu processed with calcium sulfate, broccoli, and collard and turnip greens.
- Serve flavored milk, such as chocolate or strawberry.

- Use low-fat dairy products in recipes, such as in puddings, milkshakes, soups, and casseroles.
- Serve unusual dairy products, such as new flavors of yogurt.
- If your child's digestive system cannot handle milk and other dairy products (he is lactose intolerant), try these suggestions:
 - Serve small portions of these foods throughout the day.
 - Serve these foods along with non-dairy foods.
 - Serve lactose-free dairy products, yogurt, and aged hard cheeses, such as Cheddar, Colby, Swiss, and Parmesan, that are low in lactose.
 - Give your child lactase tablets before he eats dairy products containing lactose.

- Serve foods, such as orange juice and cereal products, with added calcium (calcium-fortified).
- If these ideas do not work, talk to a health professional about giving your child a calcium supplement.
- Never place your child on a diet to lose weight, unless a health professional recommends one for medical reasons and supervises it.

My child snacks on chips and candy . What should I do?

- Serve healthy foods, such as pretzels, baked potato chips, low-fat granola bars, popcorn, 100% fruit juice, fruits, apple sauce, vegetables, and yogurt.
- Wash and cut up fruits and vegetables and keep them in the refrigerator, along with low-fat dip or salsa. Use a clear container so that the fruits and vegetables can be seen easily.
- Offer fruits (including 100% fruit juice) and vegetables for your child to eat at school.

How can I help my child maintain a healthy weight?

- If your child is growing, eats healthy foods, and is physically active, you do not need to worry about her weight.
- Serve healthy meals and snacks at scheduled times, but allow for flexibility.
- Limit foods that are high in fat, such as potato chips that are fried, and foods that are high in sugar, such as candy and soft drinks.
- Do not forbid sweets and desserts. Serve them in moderation.
- Focus on gradually changing the entire family's eating behaviors and physical activity practices.
- Plan family activities that everyone enjoys, such as hiking, biking, or swimming.
- Be a good role model—practice healthy eating behaviors and participate in regular physical activity yourself.

How can I help my child like her body?

- Children are very sensitive about how they look. Do not criticize your child about his size or shape.
- Focus on traits other than appearance when talking to your child.
- Talk to your child about how the media affects his body image.
- Be a good role model—don't criticize your own size or shape or that of others.

How can I help my child be more active?

- Encourage active, spur-of-the-moment physical activity, such as dancing to music.
- Limit the time your child spends watching TV and videotapes and playing computer games to 1 or 2 hours per day.
- Give your child chores, such as raking leaves or walking the dog.
- Make physical activity a part of your child's daily life. For example, use the stairs instead of taking an elevator or escalator, and walk or ride a bike instead of riding in a car.
- Participate in physical activity together, such as playing ball or going biking or skating. It is a great way to spend time with your child.
- Enroll your child in planned physical activities, such as swimming, martial arts, or dancing.
- Work with your community to make sure that your child has safe places for being physically active, such as walking and biking paths, playgrounds, and parks.

Notes

Resources

American Dietetic Association
Phone: (800) 366-1655
Web site: <http://www.eatright.org>

USDA Food and Nutrition Information Center
Phone: (703) 305-2554
Web site: <http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic>

This fact sheet contains general information and is not a substitute for talking with your child's health professional about your particular concerns about your child.