



Across the country, children are struggling to eat a balanced diet and get enough physical activity. The result is children — overweight, underweight, and healthy weight — who are malnourished. Children routinely do not consume adequate amounts of fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, fiber, and calcium. Children of all shapes and sizes are not making healthy choices and parents often struggle to understand how to make a difference. Fortunately, KidSmart is here to help through education and practical advice to help keep you and your family healthy.

How do know if my child's weight is healthy?

Weight status of children is often referred to by a child's body mass index or BMI. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Statistics, body mass index (BMI) is a practical measure used to determine whether or not a child's weight falls within a healthy range. BMI is a measure of weight in relation to height that, in children, places them in a percentage specific to their gender and age. BMI is the most widely accepted method used to screen for obesity in children and adolescents because it is relatively easy to obtain the height and weight measurements needed to calculate BMI; measurements are non-invasive and BMI correlates with body fatness. While BMI is an accepted screening tool for the initial assessment of body fatness in children and adolescents, it is not a diagnostic measure because BMI is not a direct measure of body fatness.

How do I know my child's BMI?

Great question! You can always get this information from your family's health care provider, but if you want to figure it out in the meantime, you can visit the CDC's child and teen BMI calculator on their website: www.cdc.gov. While you're at it, find out yours and share your family's results with your healthcare provider. For more information about BMI, visit the KidSmart Web site at www.KidSmartKid.org.



I know my child's weight is unhealthy. How can I encourage him/her without giving him/her a complex about food and weight?

Great question! The important thing to remember is why we worry about weight. We worry about weight because if you are over or underweight, you may not be as healthy. So, try to focus on the importance of being healthy and making healthy choices, as opposed to "watching your weight". Your children — and your whole family — should strive to make healthy choices as often as possible. An important part of making healthy choices is understanding balance and moderation. It's perfectly okay to have ice cream for dessert sometimes, just not every night and not an unhealthy portion. Get used to using words such as balance, healthy, and choice with your children and avoid referring to foods as good or bad, characterizing people as fat or skinny, or referring to a healthy lifestyle as being 'on a diet'.

What can I do?

A great first step is to discuss your child's health status with his/her healthcare provider. Second, remember that a healthy weight is about more than just food! It's important to watch serving sizes and make smart food choices, but it's just as important for your child, and yourself, to be active! Here are some tips to help get your child, and your family, on a path to smart, healthy living!

- Be active as a family! Take walks or go for bike rides together.
- Limit television and non-homework computer time.
- Eat meals together as often as possible.
- Introduce new fruits and vegetables to your kids.
- Pay attention to food labels and serving sizes.
- When eating out, look for KidSmart options such as skim milk, fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins.
- Most importantly, be a good example for your kids!

When will my child grow out of "baby fat"?

Children are typically their "skinniest" (BMI is at its lowest) at age 4 - 5 years. Children who are under that age should be followed routinely by their pediatrician, but typically will get thinner as they approach age 4 - 5 years. Children 5 and above tend to have an increase in BMI throughout the remainder of childhood and adolescence. Therefore, parents of children who have extra "baby fat" at age 4 or older should discuss their concerns with their pediatrician.

