

# Health Tips for Parents

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## How can I help my child eat healthier?

By encouraging healthy eating habits at a young age, parents can impact their child's lifelong relationship with food and help them grow into healthy adults.



Healthy eating can impact a child's energy, mood, mind and overall health. "There are several easy steps parents can take to encourage and instill good eating habits," advises Wendy Slusser, MD, co-founder and medical director of the UCLA Fit for Healthy Weight program.



**Cook more meals at home, have regular meal times and get your kids involved.** By cooking at home, parents have control over food choices, portion size and when meals or snacks are served. When kids are involved in shopping for and cooking meals, parents can teach them the nutritional value of each food as well as have important family time.

**Offer a healthy, balanced diet** with meals and snacks that are rich in nutrients and minerals. Half of your child's plate should contain fruits and vegetables, one quarter should contain whole grains and the other quarter should be foods high in protein. By making plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grain snacks and healthy beverages easily accessible, parents can help their child avoid foods high in sugar, salt, high-fructose corn syrup, hydrogenated oils and saturated/trans fats, and encourage a healthy diet both during meals and snack times.

**Control portion size.** Exact portion sizes differ depending on age, gender, weight and height, but a rough estimate of portion size is a one-hand fist size for fruits, vegetables, pastas and beans and a palm-size for proteins.

**Increase physical activity and limit TV/computer time.** Exercise is an important component of a healthy lifestyle. By reducing screen time, kids can avoid unnecessary empty calories from snacking and be more inclined to increase physical activity by going outside.

### 5-2-1-0 Blast-Off to Healthy Eating

- 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables
- 2 hours or less of recreational screen time
- 1 year or more of breastfeeding; with exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life with introduction of appropriate infant food at 6 months old
- Blast off and have fun with one hour or more of physical activity



## Support a healthy lifestyle

"By introducing your child at an early age to a healthy lifestyle and a well-balanced diet rich in minerals and nutrients, parents can help their child prevent obesity, diabetes and iron-deficient anemia," Dr. Slusser says. "The family home environment needs to support a healthy lifestyle for everyone."

This information is provided courtesy of the pediatricians at Mattel Children's Hospital UCLA. UCLA Health pediatricians are conveniently located in your neighborhood. In addition to our Children's Health Center in Westwood, we have offices in Brentwood, Manhattan Beach, Santa Monica and West Los Angeles. All health and health-related information contained in this publication is intended to be general in nature and should not be used as a substitute for a visit with a healthcare professional.