

How to get your kids to eat better

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(HealthDay)—If you want to keep your kids at a healthy weight, show them, don't tell them.

That's the advice of one expert who says simple and easy steps are better than direct discussions about weight and health.

"Food is powerful. It has the potential to heal and to cause sickness," said dietitian Kara Shifler Bowers, a project manager the Penn State PRO Wellness Center. "Don't underestimate the power of small changes that progress over time. All it takes is one step to start the process.

"Instead, implement an easy change, like keeping a bowl of fruit available. One change at a time is more sustainable than a complete lifestyle overhaul," she added in a university news release.

Keep sugar-sweetened beverages and foods out of your home. Limit them to holidays and celebrations. Instead, put out a large, attractive bowl of fruit and offer other healthy snack choices such as low-sugar Greek yogurt, raw veggies with hummus, nut butter, whole grains such as plain popcorn, or whole corn chips with salsa.

Get children involved in meal planning and let them choose the fruit and vegetables for side dishes, Bowers suggested.

Eat as a family as often as possible. Children who see their parents eating healthy foods are more likely to make similar choices. Don't eat in front of the television.

Go for walks, play ball or do other activities with your children. Give them time to be active for 60 minutes a day and join them for at least 30 minutes, Bowers said.

Don't use [food](#) as a reward. Instead, reward your children with extra play time or family activities.

Parents need to be patient as they guide children to make [better food](#)

[choices](#) and become more active, Bowers advised.

The news release noted government statistics show that approximately 1 in 5 school-age [children](#) in the United States is obese.

"Children with obesity are more likely than their classmates to be teased or bullied and to suffer from low self-esteem, social isolation and depression," said Dr. Alka Sood, a family medicine physician with Penn State Health Medical Group.

"They are at higher risk for other [chronic health problems](#), including asthma, sleep apnea, bone and joint problems and type 2 diabetes, and are more likely to be obese as adults resulting in increased risk of heart disease and other serious medical conditions."

More information: The American Academy of Pediatrics has more on [healthy living](#).

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