

we are family!

All children need a high level of nutrients to support their growth and development. Younger children need a constant supply of energy as they grow, while teenagers require energy stores for growth spurts.

Unfortunately, despite the abundance of healthy food available in Canada and the nation's obsession with sport, the incidence of childhood obesity is rising. Obesity in children is usually due to a combination of factors such as poor eating habits, their genetic makeup and exercise.

Children nowadays also tend to be driven to their many structured activities and have less available time for unstructured play such as bike riding, skipping or playing hide and seek. Additionally, children appear to consume more fast food, which is high in saturated fat, sugar and calories and low in nutrition.



It is important that weight control is a family affair and that family members support one another. Children need to learn from a young age what **'everyday foods'** consist of eg. Fruit, vegetables, lean meats, and some dairy products. They should also recognise what **'special occasion foods'** are eg. Candy, ice cream, cookies and fried/take out foods. Some ideas on how to affirm these definitions are:

- Make food fun. Instead of a plain fruit and vegetable platter, arrange the food items in the shape of a face or a person. You can also use toothpicks or skewers and get creative!
- Encourage your children to help in the kitchen when cooking the family dinner.
- Do not reward your children with food.
- Make sure children have a balanced breakfast. For example, scrambled eggs rather than processed cereal.
- Provide plenty of cool filtered water to satisfy children's thirst rather than having juice or soft drink in the house.
- Limit TV watching or computer games. Read the TV guide together and agree on programs that the children are allowed to watch.
- Make exercise fun and a family experience, eg. go for a bike ride, walk, fly a kite etc.
- Children are great imitators, so set a good example. You cannot expect a child to eat a salad while Mum and Dad eat deep fried fish and chips.