

Question (Parent):

1. Read this handout and circle the checks you feel need to be worked on in your home.

BUILDING HEALTHY HABITS – Parent Only

- ✓ **Eat 4-5 times per day** (breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks). Going more than four hours without food will cause the metabolism to slow down.
- ✓ **Eat breakfast** or at least “something” every morning (*anything* is better than nothing, since it will “kickstart” your child’s metabolism and enable him/her to burn more calories throughout the day. Make sure your child sticks to one breakfast if a second is being offered at school.
- ✓ **Do not join the “clean plate” club.** If a child continues to eat beyond his natural cue of feeling satisfied, he can start to lose the sensitivity to these cues, which can lead to weight gain. If the family is having dessert, do not make the child finish the “meal” portion to get to dessert. Instead, let the child take a break from the meal for dessert and if he is still hungry, he can eat more of the “meal.”
- ✓ **Set the table.** Prepare the kitchen for mealtime by clearing the kitchen table, putting the games away, and switching the TV off. Consider encouraging the kids to have fun by setting the table. Enjoy talking to each other about the day and keep topics away from issues or conflicts related to food.
- ✓ **Put food away at non-meal or snack times.** Do not leave food out for unrestricted snacking except for vegetables; this can lead to the unhealthy behavior of constantly “grazing” on food.
- ✓ **Eat all food in one designated area** in the home (e.g. the dining room).
- ✓ **Do not become a short order cook** by cooking one meal for your child and a different one for other family members. Offer the same balanced meal to the whole family. If your child refuses to eat it, then save the meal and offer it later if they get hungry or a healthy alternative; but not what they “originally ordered.” If there has been grazing before a meal, your child is going to be less accepting of foods they did not “order.” If a child eats less in one meal, they will be hungrier later and eat more for their next snack/meal.



- ✓ **Offer water for hydration** instead of juice, milk, or soda between meals.
- ✓ **It is okay to offer “sometime foods (e.g. treats, chips, and “junk” foods)** in small portions. Forbidding foods will cause the feeling of being deprived and lead to the sneaking of food. Explain that they are not the best foods but are okay once in a while. Do not keep a supply of them at home. Do not hide these foods either; children ALWAYS know and they will find them!
- ✓ **Do not use food as a bribe, reward or punishment.**
- ✓ **Offer a new food at least 10 times!** Start by offering a small portion next to a favorite food. Ask the child to try a few small bites. If the child says they like the new food, only give them more if they ask for more. Most likely, they are still unsure about the new food, so if you give them more they will say they do not like new food items in the future to prevent having to eat more. If they do not like a food say good job for trying and that it is okay that they did not like the food yet and that “we” will try it again another time. Do not hover over the child as they try the new food; pretend not to care about the results of their “taste test.” Getting your child involved in food preparation increases the likelihood of her trying and liking new foods.
- ✓ **Be a good role model.** Your child looks up to you and will copy you! This is one of the best and most effective principles for teaching good behaviors. Try the new foods with your child if they are new to you as well.
- ✓ **Not in front of friends!** Talking about healthy choices is important but do not do it in front of their friends unless they also ask for your help. You can, however, set limits for a whole group of kids if you are the adult in charge. For example, you can tell all the kids to get water and not soda.
- ✓ **Serve the same healthy snacks when friends are over.** By serving the same healthy and balanced snack to play dates, you will reinforce that healthy choices are for everyone. If you serve a different snack when friends are over, it sends your child the message that their snack is not what “normal” kids get and their friends get to eat “better” foods which will not seem fair.
- ✓ **Treat all family members the same around healthy eating.** All family members can benefit from healthful eating regardless of body size. It is not okay for one child to get cookies while the other child is given veggies with dip.



- ✓ **Be positive and kind** as you try to help a person achieve their goals. Teasing, talking harshly or making unfriendly comments about someone's weight will NOT motivate positive behavioral change.
- ✓ **Do not become a dictator**, but instead work with your child to help them say and make the right choices. If your child feels something was his idea and his choice, he is more likely to be compliant. For example, if he is going to a birthday party, ask him what he is going to do to be as healthy as possible. You might find that you hear the answer you want and that he actually sticks to the plan. When you are alone with your child after the party ask if he was able to stick to the plan. If he says "Yes," say "good job!" and get right on to the next subject. If they say "No," do not get upset and instead talk to them about what "we" can do differently the next time to make things easier.
- ✓ **It is ALWAYS a good time for good choices.** Our bodies never go on vacation and we need to treat them well every day. Going out to dinner, eating fast food, eating on the go and vacations are all times to still remember the idea of health.

My new goals...

Now that I know this information, what am I ready and willing to change to make my family healthier? (Add these goals to the Parent Goal Sheet.)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

