



FLM-FS-5-03-R09

# Raising Healthy Children in an Overweight World

**Shari L. Gallup**, M.S., CFLE, Licking County Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Educator, Ohio State University Extension, The Ohio State University; and **Beverly Keil**, M.S., Emerita Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Educator, Ohio State University Extension, The Ohio State University

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), childhood obesity in the United States is reaching epidemic proportions, and the number of overweight children has more than doubled in the last two decades. Lack of physical activity, larger portion sizes, energy intake, sedentary behaviors, and increased intake of sugar-sweetened soft drinks are all contributing factors.

As more children are being diagnosed with childhood obesity, this causes significant concern as children are developing adult onset diseases associated with obesity, such as, being diagnosed sleep apnea, Type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases.

## Some Facts About Children and Weight

- **Energy Expenditure. Food is not the only factor in weight control.** Children may be expending too little energy. Children who watch a lot of TV, play computer games, talk on the phone, or sleep excessive amounts may not be spending the calories they take in. Media use, and specifically, television viewing, may contribute to energy consumption through extra snacking and eating meals in front of the TV. Media may also influence children to make unhealthy food choices when exposed to food advertisements.

- **Children grow in spurts.** Children gain and lose weight at certain times throughout their young lives. They can hold onto their weight but grow in height, and suddenly that pudgy toddler is a slender child several inches taller. So when should we become concerned? Overweight children are defined as those over 95th percentile of weight for their height (Tufts University, 2001).
- **Children's appetites vary greatly from day to day** and so do the foods they like. This means that one day your child might love broccoli with cheese and the next day not want anything to do with that same food.
- **More high-calorie, high-fat convenience foods and high soda consumption have increased calories in many diets.** Researchers have found that obese individuals underreport calories they consume by 30%–50%. Evidence is limited on specific foods or dietary patterns that contribute to excessive energy intake in children and teens. However, large portion sizes for food and beverages, eating meals away from home, frequent snacking on energy-dense foods, and consuming beverages with added sugar are often hypothesized as contributing to excess energy intake of children and teens.

- **Genetics. Children with slender parents have only a 10% chance of being overweight.** However, if both parents are overweight, the chance of their child being overweight jumps to 80% (Whitney and Rolfes, 1999). However, this genetic susceptibility may need to exist in conjunction with contributing environmental and behavioral factors (such as a high-calorie food supply and minimal physical activity) to have a significant effect on weight. However, the genetic characteristics of the human population have not changed in the last three decades, but the prevalence of obesity has tripled among school-aged children during that time.
- **Nutrient-free beverages, like soda, crowd out nutrient-rich beverages, like milk,”** said Greg Miller, Ph.D., vice-president of nutrition research at the National Dairy Council. Research indicates that the decrease in milk and dairy product consumption, along with the increase in soda and snack consumption, plays an important role in this current epidemic.

### What’s a Parent to Do?

To help your child maintain a healthy weight, balance calories they consume (from both food and beverages) with calories your child uses through normal growth and activity.

GOAL: Remember the goal for overweight and obese children and teens is to reduce the rate of weight gain through normal growth and development.

- **Buy foods that are fresh and healthy.** Ellyn Satter, noted child psychologist and nutritionist, believes that it is the parents’ responsibility to make sure nutritious foods are brought into the home, cooked, and put on the table. However, she also believes that it is the child’s responsibility for choosing which foods to eat, how much to eat, and even whether or not he/she wants to eat anything at all.
- **Model good eating habits.** It is important for parents to encourage children to eat healthy, simply by showing them our good example! Children are more likely to choose healthy foods if they see you doing so!
- **Provide healthy meal options at home.**
  - Provide plenty of vegetables, fruits, and whole grain products.
  - Include low-fat milk dairy products.

- Choose lean meats.
- Serve reasonably sized portions.
- Encourage drinking a lot of water.
- Limit sugar-sweetened beverages.
- Limit consumption of sugar and saturated fat.
- **Environments (both home and school) are important.** Approaches for preventing and treating childhood obesity should focus on both home and school environments. Some ideas may include setting aside time for healthy meals and regular physical activity.

### How You Can Help

Change is on the horizon with local school districts as well as professionals bonding together in an effort to improve kids’ health. Building on the success of the Los Angeles Unified School District (2nd largest in the country) which voted to ban the sale of carbonated soft drinks beginning January 1, 2004, you could help to implement change with your local community by getting involved with PTO, working to inform school personnel, and lobbying for changes in school dietary standards. Many schools have already banned soda machines and replaced those with water or healthier versions of beverages.

In addition to keeping involved at the local level, there are many great resources that can help to keep you informed regarding childhood health issues:

BAM! Body and Mind

MyPyramid Blast Off Game

Powerful Girls Powerful Bones

VERB

[www.familyfoodzone.com](http://www.familyfoodzone.com)

<http://www.actionforhealthykids.org>

<http://www.cnr.berkeley.edu/cwh/PDFs/flyer.pdf>

[www.kidsource.com](http://www.kidsource.com)

Although it does take more time to be involved in your child’s nutrition and eating habits, remember that you (parents) can have the greatest influence in making a lifelong difference in your child’s health and eating habits.

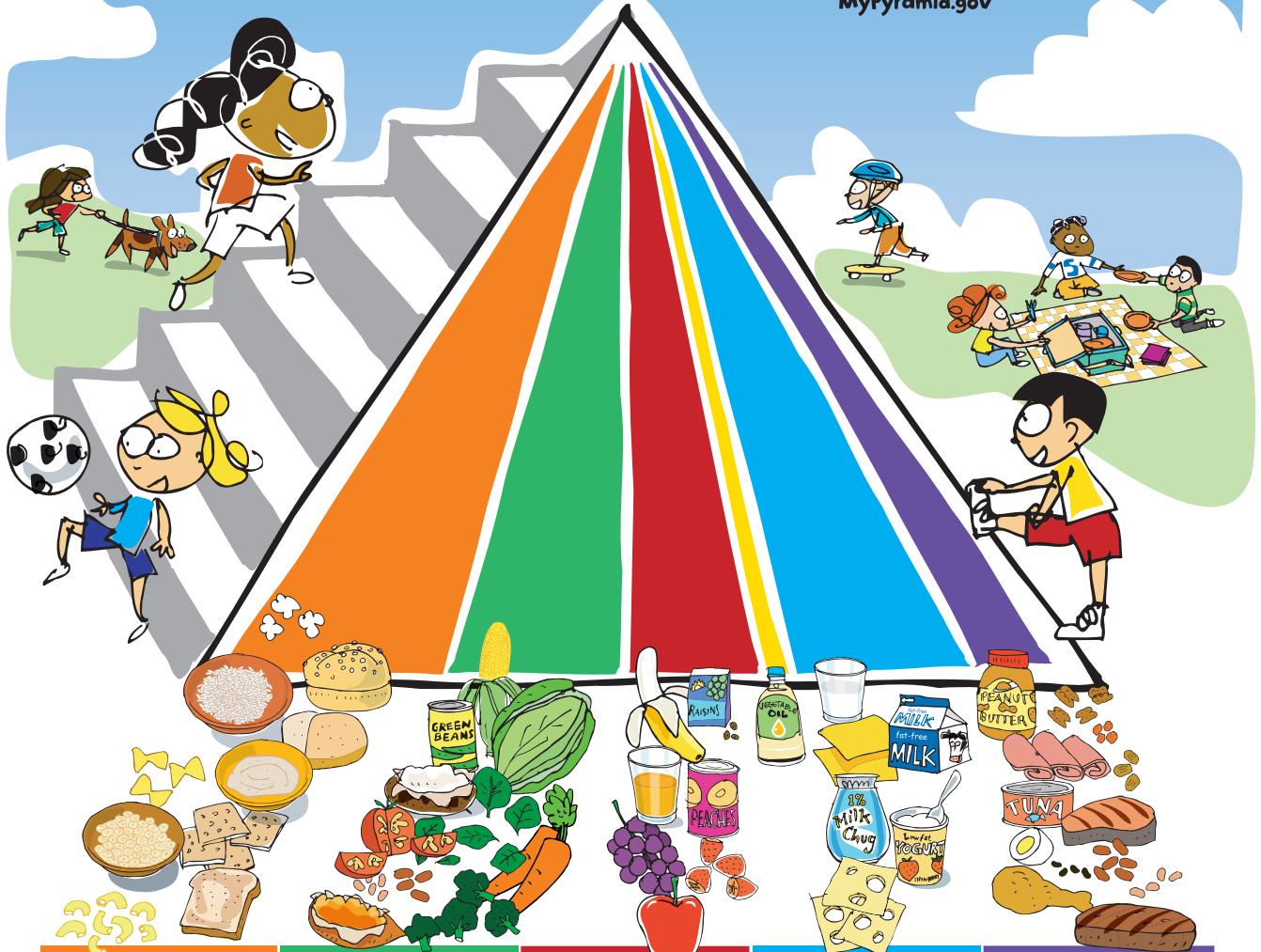
**Share the MyPyramid for Kids poster on the next page with your children to help them learn more about healthy eating and staying active. You can also find more information at [MyPyramid.gov](http://MyPyramid.gov)**

# MyPyramid

For Kids

Eat Right. Exercise. Have Fun.

MyPyramid.gov



<b>Grains</b> Make half your grains whole	<b>Vegetables</b> Vary your veggies	<b>Fruits</b> Focus on fruits	<b>Milk</b> Get your calcium-rich foods	<b>Meat &amp; Beans</b> Go lean with protein
<p>Start smart with breakfast. Look for whole-grain cereals.</p> <p>Just because bread is brown doesn't mean it's whole-grain. Search the ingredients list to make sure the first word is "whole" (like "whole wheat").</p>	<p>Color your plate with all kinds of great-tasting veggies.</p> <p>What's green and orange and tastes good? Veggies! Go dark green with broccoli and spinach, or try orange ones like carrots and sweet potatoes.</p>	<p>Fruits are nature's treats – sweet and delicious.</p> <p>Go easy on juice and make sure it's 100%.</p>	<p>Move to the milk group to get your calcium. Calcium builds strong bones.</p> <p>Look at the carton or container to make sure your milk, yogurt, or cheese is lowfat or fat-free.</p>	<p>Eat lean or lowfat meat, chicken, turkey, and fish. Ask for it baked, broiled, or grilled – not fried.</p> <p>It's nutty, but true. Nuts, seeds, peas, and beans are all great sources of protein, too.</p>

For an 1,800-calorie diet, you need the amounts below from each food group. To find the amounts that are right for you, go to [MyPyramid.gov](http://MyPyramid.gov).

<b>Eat 6 oz. every day:</b> at least half should be whole	<b>Eat 2 1/2 cups every day</b>	<b>Eat 1 1/2 cups every day</b>	<b>Get 3 cups every day:</b> for kids ages 2 to 8, it's 2 cups	<b>Eat 5 oz. every day</b>
--	---------------------------------	---------------------------------	---	----------------------------

**Oils** Oils are not a food group, but you need some for good health. Get your oils from fish, nuts, and liquid oils such as corn oil, soybean oil, and canola oil.

<p><b>Find your balance between food and fun</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Move more. Aim for at least 60 minutes everyday, or most days.</li> <li>Walk, dance, bike, rollerblade – it all counts. How great is that!</li> </ul>	<p><b>Fats and sugars – know your limits</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Get your fat facts and sugar smarts from the Nutrition Facts label.</li> <li>Limit solid fats as well as foods that contain them.</li> <li>Choose food and beverages low in added sugars and other caloric sweeteners.</li> </ul>
---	---



## References

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2003). [www.cdc.gov/nchs](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs); printed data 3 June 2002.
- Childhood Obesity*. Washington, DC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Teaching and Teacher Education, American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. (ERIC Digest ED 328556). [www.kidsource.com](http://www.kidsource.com); printed data 30 January 2003.
- Coon, K. A., & Tucker, K. L. (2002). Television and children's consumption patterns. A review of the literature. *Minerva Pediatr*, 54, 423–436.
- Ebbeling, C. B., et al. (2002). Childhood obesity: Public-health crisis, common sense cure. *The Lancet*, 360, 473–482.
- Francis, L. A., & Birch, L. L. (2006). Does eating during television viewing affect preschool children's intake? *J Am Diet Assoc*, 106, 598–600.
- Gillman, N. W., Rifas-Shiman, S. L., Frazier, A. L., Rockett, H. R. H., Camargo, Jr., C. A., Field, A. E., Berkey, C. S., & Colditz, G. A. (2000, March). Family dinner and diet quality among older children and adolescents. *Archives of Family Medicine*, 9, 235–240.
- Institute of Medicine. (2005). Preventing Childhood Obesity—Health in the Balance. The National Academies Press, Washington, DC.
- National Dairy Council. (2002, December). New study links over-consumption of soft and fruit drinks to childhood obesity. <http://www.nationaldairycouncil.org/lv104/newsres>; printed data 6 December 2002.
- Nonas, C. (2003). Childhood obesity: Managing your child's food environment. [www.kidsource.healthology.com](http://www.kidsource.healthology.com); printed data 6 February 2003.
- Ogden, C. L., Flegal, K. M., Carroll, M. D., & Johnson, C. L. (2002). Prevalence and trends in overweight among U.S. children and adolescents, 1999–2000. *JAMA*, 288 (14), 1728–1732.
- Ogden, C. L., Carroll, M. D., & Flegal, K. M. (2008). High Body Mass Index for Age Among U.S. Children and Adolescents, 2003–2006. *JAMA*, 299, 2401–2405.
- Pereira, M. A., et al. (2002). Dairy consumption, obesity and the insulin resistance syndrome in young adults. *JAMA*, 287, 2081–2089.
- Satter, E. (1991). *Child of mine, feeding with love and good sense*. Bull Publishing Company.
- Serrano, E. (2002, September/October). USDA Project, Reversing childhood obesity trends: Helping children achieve healthy weights. Virginia Polytech Institute and State University. <http://nature.berkeley.edu/cwh>; printed data 4 December 2002.
- Stice, E., Cameron, R. P., Hayward, C., Barr, C., & Killen, J. D. (1999). Naturalistic weight reduction efforts prospectively predict growth in relative weight and onset of obesity among female adolescents. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 67, 6, 967–974.
- Tufts University. (2001). Childhood hunger, childhood obesity: An examination of the paradox. Center on Hunger and Poverty. School of Nutrition Science and Policy, Tufts University.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Washington, DC. <http://www.hhs.gov/news>.
- Whitney, E. N., & Rolfes, S. R. (1999). *Understanding nutrition*. California: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

The previous version of this fact sheet was published as part of the Family Life Month Packet 2003, Family and Consumer Sciences, Human Development and Family Science, The Ohio State University.

## EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION

Visit Ohio State University Extension's web site "Ohioline" at: <http://ohioline.osu.edu>

Ohio State University Extension embraces human diversity and is committed to ensuring that all research and related educational programs are available to clientele on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, or veteran status. This statement is in accordance with United States Civil Rights Laws and the USDA.

Keith L. Smith, Ph.D., Associate Vice President for Agricultural Administration and Director, Ohio State University Extension

TDD No. 800-589-8292 (Ohio only) or 614-292-1868