

# FitFacts®



## Parents. . .Eat Your Words!

KIDS TODAY ARE FATTER AND LESS FIT THAN PREVIOUS GENERATIONS. RESEARCH SHOWS THAT OVERWEIGHT CHILDREN ARE MORE LIKELY TO BECOME OVERWEIGHT OR OBESE ADULTS, AND HAVE AN INCREASED RISK FOR CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE AND TYPE 2 DIABETES. FOOD COMPANIES SPEND MILLIONS OF ADVERTISING DOLLARS TO CONVINCED CHILDREN THAT HIGH-FAT, HIGH-SUGAR, PROCESSED FOODS ARE WORTH EATING. FOOD IS CONSUMED BECAUSE IT'S COOL OR COMES WITH A FREE TOY, RATHER THAN FOR ITS IMPACT ON HEALTH OR EVEN FOR ITS TASTE.

So what's a parent to do? Eat your words! [Parents who have adopted a lifestyle that includes healthful foods and regular exercise are role models for their children.](#) The behaviors seen at home are the ones children will most likely adopt for themselves, and parents' efforts to promote healthy food habits do make a difference. Eat at least one meal together as a family each day so that your children can regularly observe healthy eating habits.

**STACK THE DECK.** Stock the kitchen with mostly healthy items, keeping in mind that kids want some of their favorite sweet and/or salty foods. Save these foods for once-in-a-while treats, and make their regular snacks healthier. Buy pretzels, which are low in fat, instead of greasy chips. Keep cut-up vegetables and mini-carrots in the refrigerator. Sprinkle air-popped popcorn with grated parmesan cheese instead of butter. Check out [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org) for other healthy snack ideas.

Get kids committed to healthy eating habits by involving them with the food shopping and preparation, and they'll make more intelligent food choices. Find a children's cookbook that emphasizes ways to modify your kids' favorite foods rather than eliminate them. Also, [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov) has great educational tools for teaching children about balanced nutrition and physical activity.

**BALANCE IS EVERYTHING.** The key to keeping kids happy and healthy is to strike a balance between foods that are good for them and those that just taste good, and between sedentary leisure time and physical activity. The most obvious impact of inactivity is the strong association between the amount

of screen time and the level of obesity among youngsters. **Children should engage in 60 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity each day.** Encourage kids to get outside and play. As a family, go for a bike ride, play catch or walk the dog. You will get some exercise in, set a great example for your kids, and create memories. It's a win-win-win situation!

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[American Council on Exercise](#)

ACE Fit Blog: [Operation FitKids](#)

[Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#)