

8 TO LIVE BY

HABIT BUILDER for Kids, Teens, and Families

To reach and keep a healthy weight, build better habits together. The 8 habits prescribed below are the best place to start. Scientific studies show that these have the biggest impact on your weight, your health, and your outlook.



1 Always eat breakfast—and make it healthy

- Eating a healthy breakfast can improve your memory, boost your creativity, raise your test scores—and help you reach and keep a healthy weight.
- Aim for breakfasts that include **3 of the 5 main food groups**. Try combos such as: (cereal + milk + juice) or (eggs + toast + milk) or (fruit + yogurt + bagel).

2 Eat more fruits and vegetables

- Fruits and vegetables are full of nutrients that help you learn and grow, prevent disease, and keep up your energy and mood. Studies show that they're important for a healthy body weight, too.
- Every day, aim to get **1 to 2 cups of fruit**, and **1½ to 3 cups of vegetables**.

3 Limit—or eliminate—sweetened drinks

- Studies suggest that America's weight problem is linked to America's "drinking problem"—that is, to our increasing intake of sweetened drinks like sodas and sports drinks. Sweetened drinks are also linked to weak bones and tooth decay.
- Aim for **less than 12 ounces per week** of soda, sports drinks, lemonade, and other sweetened drinks. Limit juice to less than 6 ounces per day. Drink water instead, and aim for 3 glasses of milk each day.

ACTIVITY



4 Limit screen time (TV, video games, Internet)

- Research links TV to a wide range of negative health effects in children and teens—including obesity.
- Make a rule of **no more than 1 to 2 hours a day** in front of a TV or computer screen. (Children age 2 and under shouldn't be watching at all.)

5 Increase your physical activity

- Everyone needs regular physical activity—regardless of their shape, size, health, or age. Physical activity gives you better energy, stronger muscles, less stress, and easier weight management.
- Aim for **at least 60 minutes of physical activity** every day. You can get most of this from daily playtime, walking or biking to school, or family activities. The rest can come from sports or other exercise.

SUPPORT



6 Eat meals together as a family—sitting down

- Many studies have shown that children and teens who eat regular meals with their parents are more likely to eat in a balanced way, do well in school, and maintain a healthy weight.
- Aim to **eat dinner together** most nights of the week. Sit down at the table, turn the TV off, and enjoy!

7 Be positive about food

- Experts agree that how you think and talk about food and bodies can have a big impact on your health now—and in the future.
- Forget "forbidden foods"—all foods can fit in a balanced diet. Don't give food as a reward or withhold it as a punishment. **Be food-friendly**, not food-phobic.

8 Don't criticize about weight

- If you, your friends, or your family obsess about food or weight, you're more likely to have unhealthy behaviors—and an unhealthy body weight.
- Watch what you say. **Don't criticize** your own body—even as a joke. **Don't compare** your own weight, size, or shape to anyone else's. Being healthy means being positive.