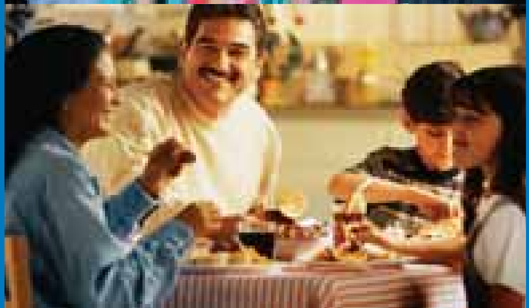
We Can!
Ways to Enhance Children's Activity & Nutrition

Families Finding the Balance

A Parent Handbook



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
National Institutes of Health

For More Information:

The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) Health Information Center is a service of the NHLBI of the National Institute of Health. The NHLBI Health Information Center provides information to health professionals, patients, and the public about the treatment, diagnosis, and prevention of heart, lung, and blood diseases and sleep disorders. For more information, contact:

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National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases
National Institute of Child Health and Human Development
National Cancer Institute

We Can! (**W**ays to **E**nhance **C**hildren's **A**ctivity & **N**utrition) is a new public education outreach program designed to help children 8–13 years old stay at a healthy weight through improving food choices, increasing physical activity, and reducing screen time. The program is a collaboration of four Institutes of the National Institutes of Health (NIH): the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), and National Cancer Institute (NCI).

We Can! is unique because it focuses on parents and families in home and community settings. Research shows that parents and families have a big impact on shaping the behavior of children. They can do much to help children maintain a healthy weight and prevent overweight. ***We Can!*** is harnessing that power through:

- Programs in local communities throughout the country
- Partnerships with other national organizations that care about children and their health
- A comprehensive Web site for parents (**http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov**)

Read on to understand why overweight is a problem for children as well as adults in the United States. Learn about energy balance—the key to managing weight—and get lots of ideas and tips to help you and your children eat right and be physically active. And find out about places to go for further information and more strategies.

We Can! Families Finding the Balance: A Parent Handbook

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1-Why Should We Care About Our Weight?

These days, it seems as though everybody is talking about overweight and obesity and what to do about it. Why is it such a big deal?

Because, as a Nation, we've been getting steadily heavier. As the two maps on page 2 show, the number of adults who are obese has increased dramatically, even in the past decade or so. And it's not just a slightly larger waistline that might come with middle age. It's weight gain that damages our health. According to national data analyzed in 2002, it's estimated that 65 percent of Americans are now overweight or obese, and more than 61 million adults are obese.

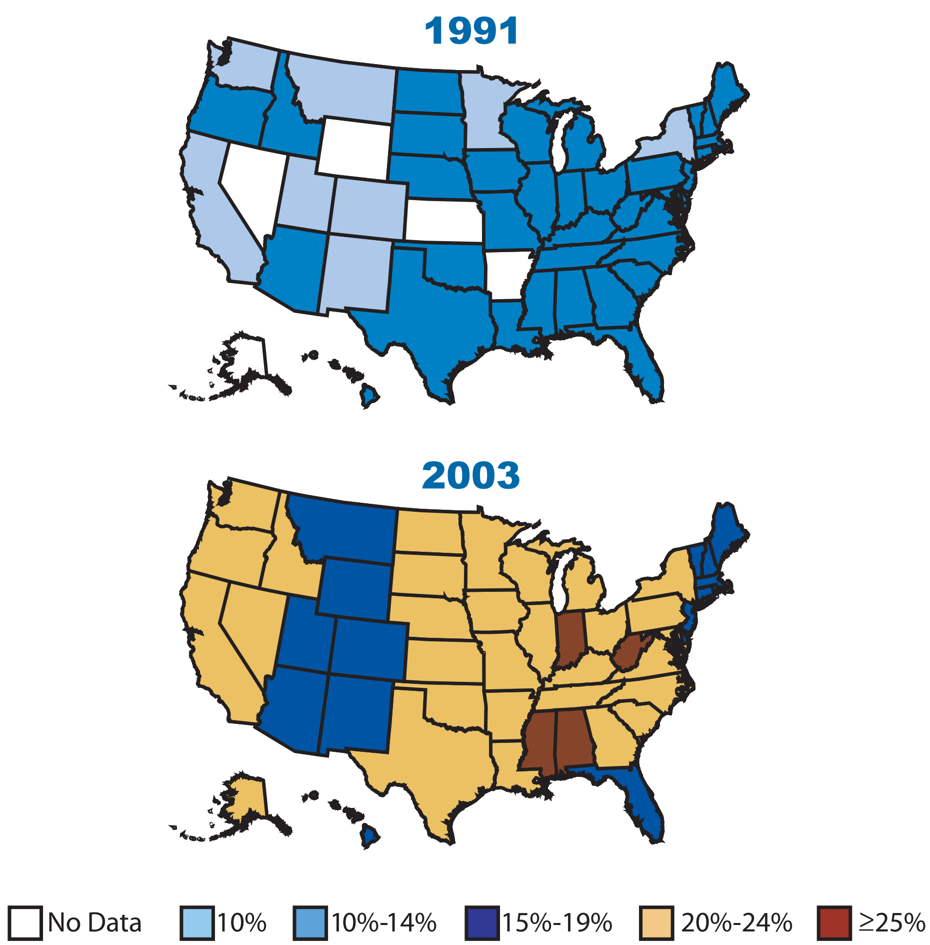
Adults aren't the only ones who've been getting heavier. Children have been getting heavier as well. The percentage of children and teens who are overweight has more than doubled since the 1970s. About 16 percent of children and teens are overweight.

How America Has Changed

1990. In 10 States, fewer than 10 percent of adults were obese. In 33 States, 10 to 14 percent of adults were obese. In no State were more than 15 percent of adults obese.

Flash forward to 2003. In every State, at least 15 percent of adults were obese. In 15 States, 15 to 19 percent of adults were obese. In 31 States, 20 to 24 percent of adults were obese. In four States, more than 25 percent of adults were obese.

Obesity Trends Among U.S. Adults



Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/obesity/trend/maps/index.htm

The Downside of Overweight

People have lots of reasons to care if they weigh too much, both in the short run and over the long haul. In the short run, when a child is overweight, it can be hard to keep up with friends, play outside at recess, or wear the latest styles. Other kids at school can sometimes tease. Excess weight can be hard for adults, too. Clothes feel too tight, it's not always easy to be active, and one can tire easily.

Those extra pounds also have long-term consequences for both adults and children. Overweight is linked to increased risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, certain cancers, and other chronic conditions. Health experts are especially concerned about the long-term consequences of excess weight in children. For example, type 2 diabetes was once rare in children. Now, it is estimated to account for 8 to 45 percent of newly diagnosed cases of childhood diabetes. Most cases of type 2 diabetes in children occur in those who are overweight. And overweight children are likely to become overweight or obese adults.

2-What Can My Family and I Do to Encourage a Healthy Weight?

It's one thing to think about the national epidemic of obesity, but as a parent, what can you do about it? The two main ways to encourage and maintain a healthy weight and prevent overweight are to make smart food choices and to be physically active. That's what this ***We Can!*** handbook is all about—giving you lots of ideas that can help you and your family take action for a healthy weight.

Why parents? Because as parents, you make a big difference in what children think and do. Your children look up to you as role models. If you eat right and are physically active, you have a good chance of helping your children make those choices, too.

Why families? As a family, ***We Can!*** be more successful in adopting healthy choices and making changes. It's hard to make changes on your own. Creating family habits around smart eating and physical activity can make it easier for everyone to maintain a healthy weight.

For example,

- Planning regular family time that involves physical activity means that everyone is supported and encouraged to be active.
- Putting a bowl of fruit on the kitchen counter and making a family agreement not to have chips or other high-calorie snacks in the house can change everyone's snacking habits.

Strategies for Real Life

If you're interested in jump-starting your family on a healthy lifestyle by making some nutrition and physical activity changes, here are a few strategies to get you started:

- **Recognize that you have more control than you might think.** You **can** turn off the TV and the video game. You **can** choose to get off the bus one stop earlier than usual and walk the rest of the way, especially when you are with your kids. You **can** give your family more vegetables for dinner.

- **Think about the immediate benefits.** If reducing future heart disease risk seems a bit abstract, focus on the good things that can happen right now. You won't feel so full if you have a smaller portion or skip dessert. Going hiking with your teenager might lead to a wonderful talk

that neither of you anticipated. A fruit salad tastes great and looks beautiful. Dancing with your spouse is lots of fun and can give you a great workout.

- **Make small, easy changes over time.** Suggesting that family members take a run together every day will probably get you lots of eye-rolling and “no-thank-you’s.” It’s easier and more appealing to start out with some new approaches to nutrition and physical activity that the whole family is really willing to try. For example, take a walk after dinner a couple of nights a week instead of turning on the TV. And, instead of chocolate cake with frosting, enjoy sliced strawberries over angel food cake.

- **Try a variety of strategies.** No one will notice if you use part-skim mozzarella cheese instead of whole-milk mozzarella in your lasagna, but you’ll be reducing the calories and fat for everyone who eats it. Combine “invisible” strategies like this with strategies that actively involve other family members: See if everyone will commit to eating healthy dinners together at least four times a week. Get your children involved in the process of shopping for and preparing these healthy dinners. Make a plan with your child to walk to school together or to walk after dinner 2 days a week.

What is a "Healthy Weight?"

People have different ideas about what a "healthy" weight is. Some think that a model–thin physique is a healthy weight; others think that they can have some extra padding around the middle and still be at a healthy weight. That's why health experts have developed standards that define normal weight, overweight, and obesity.

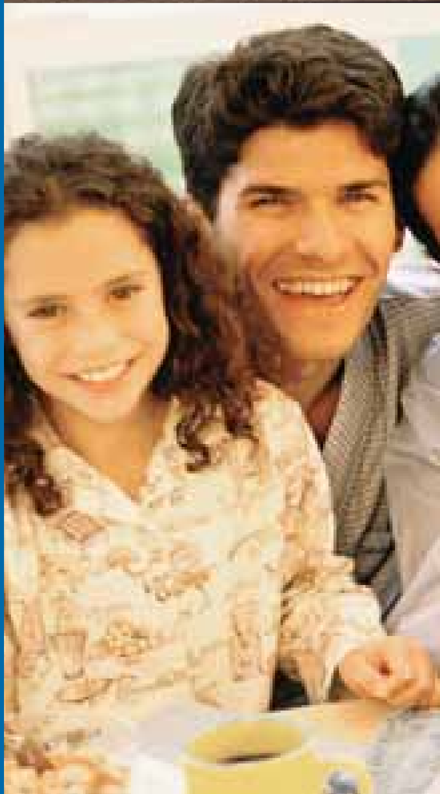
For adults, a normal, or healthy, weight is defined as an appropriate weight in relation to height. This ratio of weight to height is known as the body mass index (BMI). People who are overweight might have too much body weight for their height. People who are obese almost always have a large amount of extra body fat in relation to their height. There are some exceptions. Big athletes with lots of muscle might have a BMI greater than 30 but would not be considered obese from the perspective of health risk.

For adults, BMI falls into the following categories:

Weight Status	BMI
Normal, or healthy, weight	18.5–24.9
Overweight	25–29.9
Obese	30.0 and above

For example, a woman who is 5'5" and weighs 132 pounds has a BMI of 22— healthy weight. If she weighs 162 pounds, she'd have a BMI of 27 (overweight). If she weighs 186 pounds, she'd have a BMI of 31 (obese). To find out more about BMI and how to calculate your own number, try NHLBI's calculator at **www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi/bmicalc.htm.**

For **children and teens**, overweight is defined differently than it is for adults. Because children are still growing, and boys and girls develop at different rates, BMIs for children 2–20 years old are determined by comparing their weight and height against growth charts that take their age and gender into account. A child's "BMI-for-age" shows how his or her BMI compares with other girls or boys of the same age. A child or teen who is between the 85th and 95th percentile on the growth chart is considered at risk of overweight. A child or teen who is at the 95th percentile or above is considered overweight. Ask your family doctor, pediatrician, or health care provider about your child's BMI-for-age. For more information about BMI-for-age and growth charts for children, visit **www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/bmi/bmi-for-age.htm.**



3-Energy Balance: The Heart of the Matter

A person's weight is the result of many things working together—height, genes, metabolism (the way your body converts food and oxygen into energy), behavior, and environment. Changes in our environment that make it harder to engage in healthy behaviors have a lot to do with the overall increase in weight over the past few decades:

- We're an in-the-car and sit-behind-a-desk society. For many of us—parents and children alike—daily life doesn't involve a lot of physical activity. If we want to be active, we have to make an effort.

- Food is everywhere, along with messages telling us to eat and drink. We can even get something to eat at places where food was never available before—like the gas station. Going out to eat or buying carryout is easy.

- Food portions in restaurants and at home are bigger than they used to be.

Becoming overweight doesn't happen overnight. It develops over time when the energy we take in by eating is not in balance with the energy we burn from physical activity.

What Is Energy Balance?

Energy is just another word for calories. Whenever you eat or drink, **ENERGY** (in the form of calories) is coming **IN**. At the same time, your body is constantly working, so **ENERGY** (in the form of calories) is going **OUT**. Your body burns a certain number of calories just to carry out basic functions like breathing and digesting. Children also need extra calories to help them grow and develop. A big person burns more calories every day than a small person. You also burn a certain number of calories through your daily activities. For example, children burn calories being students. Adults burn calories being office workers, kindergarten teachers, construction workers, stay-at-home parents, and everything in between. People with active lifestyles burn more calories than those with not-so-active lifestyles. Finally, people burn calories through extra physical activity, from lifting weights to running to playing on the playground. Vigorous physical activity (such as running) burns more calories than moderate or low-intensity physical activity (such as walking). See the Estimated Calorie Requirements on page 11.

To imagine energy balance, think of a scale…

Energy balance means that your ENERGY IN (all the calories from the foods and drinks you consume every day) equals your ENERGY OUT (all the calories you burn to keep your body going and carry out your activities).

The same amount of energy IN and energy OUT over time ***= weight stays the same***

More IN than OUT over time = weight gain

More OUT than IN over time = weight loss

Your energy IN and OUT don't have to balance exactly every day. It's the balance over time that determines whether you can maintain a healthy weight in the long run. And, because children need energy to grow properly, energy balance in children happens when the amount of energy IN and energy OUT supports natural growth without promoting excess weight gain.

Estimated Calorie Requirements

(In Kilocalories) for Each Gender and Age Group at Three Levels of Physical Activity[a]

		Activity Level [b,c,d]		
Gender	**Age (years)**	**Sedentary[b]**	**Moderately Active[c]**	**Active[d]**
Child	2–3	1,000	1,000–1,400[e]	1,000–1,400[e]
Female	4–8	1,200	1,400–1,600	1,400–1,800
	9–13	1,600	1,600–2,000	1,800–2,200
	14–18	1,800	2,000	2,400
	19–30	2,000	2,000–2,200	2,400
	31–50	1,800	2,000	2,200
	51+	1,600	1,800	2,000–2,200
Male	4–8	1,400	1,400–1,600	1,600–2,000
	9–13	1,800	1,800–2,200	2,000–2,600
	14–18	2,200	2,400–2,800	2,800–3,200
	19–30	2,400	2,600–2,800	3,000
	31–50	2,200	2,400–2,600	2,800–3,000
	51+	2,000	2,200–2,400	2,400–2,800

Source: HHS/USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2005

[a] These levels are based on Estimated Energy Requirements (EER) from the Institute of Medicine Dietary Reference Intakes macronutrients report, 2002, calcu lated by gender, age, and activity level for reference-sized individuals. "Reference size," as determined by IOM, is based on median height and weight for ages up to age 18 years of age and median height and weight for that height to give a BMI of 21.5 for adult females and 22.5 for adult males.

[b] Sedentary means a lifestyle that includes only the light physical activity associated with typical day-to-day life.

[c] Moderately active means a lifestyle that includes physical activity equivalent to walking about 1.5 to 3 miles per day at 3 to 4 miles per hour, in addition to the light physical activity associated with typical day-to-day life

[d] Active means a lifestyle that includes physical activity equivalent to walking more than 3 miles per day at 3 to 4 miles per hour, in addition to the light physical activity associated with typical day-to-day life.

[e] The calorie ranges shown are to accommodate needs of different ages within the group. For children and adolescents, more calories are needed at older ages. For adults, fewer calories are needed at older ages.

TIP:

Here are a few small and easy things that you and your family can do to get energy IN and energy OUT in balance. Give them a try! You also can visit the ***We Can!*** Web site at **http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov** for lots more ideas just like them.

ENERGY IN

- Choose food portions no larger than your fist.
- Choose a checkout line without a candy display.
- Eat a low-fat, high-fiber breakfast—it may make you less hungry later in the day.
- Cut high-calorie foods like cheese and chocolate into small pieces and eat fewer pieces.

ENERGY OUT

- Take the long way to the water cooler.
- Buy a set of hand weights and play a round of Simon Says with your children—you do it with the weights, they do it without.
- Choose "labor-spending" devices instead of "labor-saving" devices: wash the car by hand instead of going through an automatic car wash.
- Go on a family bike ride or hike.

A Real-Life Example of Energy Balance

Consuming 150 calories a day more than you burn in activity can lead to a gain of 5 pounds in 6 months, or 10 pounds in a year. To prevent that from happening, you can either reduce your energy IN or increase your energy OUT. Doing both is another great idea:

Two easy ways to reduce energy IN by 150 calories:

- Drink water instead of a 12-ounce regular soda.
- Downsize a medium french fries to a small, or substitute a salad.

Two easy ways to increase energy OUT by 150 calories*:

- Shoot hoops for 30 minutes.
- Walk 2 miles in 30 minutes.

*Calories burned by a 150-pound person. People who weigh less will burn fewer calories doing these activities; people who weigh more will burn more.

4-Energy IN: Focusing on Food Choices and Portion Size

And the most important tip of all….

- Acknowledge and reward your efforts: spend the afternoon with a friend. Buy fresh flowers for your home. Do something special just for you.

Calories do count, no matter what kind of food or drink they come from. The trick to controlling energy IN is to:

- Choose foods that are low or moderate in calories.
- Enjoy small portions at home and at restaurants.

Focus on Food Choices

An eating plan that can help you and your family maintain a healthy weight is one that gives everyone the nutrients they need while keeping calories under control. One way to put this plan into action is to think about food choices in terms of GO, SLOW, and WHOA foods:*

*Adapted from CATCH: Coordinated Approach to Child Health, 4th Grade Curriculum, University of California and Flaghouse, Inc., 2002

GO foods are the lowest in fat and added sugar. They also are "nutrient dense," which means that they are rich in nutrients (vitamins, minerals, and other components important to health) and relatively low in calories. Enjoy GO foods almost anytime.

Fruits and vegetables are great GO foods.

- **GO for color**—choose dark green, deep yellow, orange, red, blue, and purple.
- **GO for sensory appeal**—juicy, crunchy, tart, crisp, sweet, yummy.
- **GO for variety**—berries, other fruits, leafy greens, dry beans and peas, starchy vegetables (like potatoes), and other vegetables.

SLOW foods are higher in fat, added sugar, and calories than GO foods. Have SLOW foods sometimes, at most several times a week.

WHOA foods are the highest in fat and added sugar. They are "calorie dense" (high in calories), and many are low in nutrients as well. Have WHOA foods only once in a while or on special occasions. And, when you do have them, have small portions.

Translating GO, SLOW, and WHOA into daily food choices means:

- Emphasizing fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products.
- Including lean meat, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, and nuts.
- Cutting back on foods and drinks that are high in fat and added sugar.

GO, SLOW, and WHOA Foods

Use this chart as a guide to help you and your family make smart food choices. Post it on your refrigerator at home or take it with you to the store when you shop. Refer to the Estimated Calorie Requirements on page 11 to determine how much of these foods to eat to maintain energy balance.

- **GO Foods**—Eat almost anytime.
- **SLOW Foods**—Eat sometimes, at most several times a week.
- **WHOA Foods**—Eat only once in a while or on special occasions.

Food Group	GO (Almost Anytime Foods)	SLOW (Sometimes Foods)	WHOA (Once in a While Foods)
	Nutrient-Dense ←→		Calorie-Dense
Vegetables	Almost all fresh, frozen, and canned vegetables without added fat and sauces	All vegetables with added fat and sauces; oven-baked french fries; avocado	Fried potatoes, like french fries or hash browns; other deep-fried vegetables
Fruits	All fresh, frozen, canned (in juice)	100 percent fruit juice; fruits canned in light syrup; dried fruits	Fruits canned in heavy syrup
Breads and Cereals	Whole-grain breads, pita bread, tortillas, and pasta; brown rice; hot and cold unsweetened whole-grain breakfast cereals	White refined flour bread, rice, and pasta; French toast; taco shells; cornbread; biscuits; granola; waffles and pancakes	Croissants; muffins; doughnuts; sweet rolls; crackers made with trans fats; sweetened breakfast cereals
Milk and Milk Products	Fat-free or 1 percent reduced-fat milk; fat-free or low-fat yogurt; part-skim, reduced fat, and fat-free cheese; low-fat or fat-free cottage cheese	2 percent low-fat milk; processed cheese spread	Whole milk; full-fat American, cheddar, Colby, Swiss, cream cheese; whole-milk yogurt
Meats, Poultry, Fish, Eggs, Beans, and Nuts	Trimmed beef and pork; extra lean ground beef; chicken and turkey without skin; tuna canned in water; baked, broiled, steamed, grilled fish and shellfish; beans, split peas, lentils, tofu; egg whites and egg substitutes	Lean ground beef, broiled hamburgers; ham, Canadian bacon; chicken and turkey with skin; low-fat hot dogs; tuna canned in oil; peanut butter; nuts; whole eggs cooked without added fat	Untrimmed beef and pork; regular ground beef; fried hamburgers; ribs; bacon; fried chicken, chicken nuggets; hot dogs, lunch meats, pepperoni, sausage; fried fish and shellfish; whole eggs cooked with fat
Sweets and Snacks*	Ice milk bars; frozen fruit juice bars; low-fat frozen yogurt and ice cream; fig bars, ginger snaps; baked chips; low-fat microwave popcorn; pretzels		Cookies and cakes; pies; cheese cake; ice cream; chocolate; candy; chips; buttered microwave popcorn
Fats	Vinegar; ketchup; mustard; fat-free creamy salad dressing; fat-free mayonnaise; fat-free sour cream;vegetable oil, olive oil, and oil-based salad dressing**	Low-fat creamy salad dressing; low-fat mayonnaise; low-fat sour cream	Butter, margarine; lard; salt pork; gravy; regular creamy salad dressing; mayonnaise; tartar sauce; sour cream; cheese sauce; cream sauce; cream cheese dips
Beverages	Water, fat-free milk, or 1 percent reduced-fat milk; diet soda; diet iced teas and lemonade	2 percent low-fat milk; 100 percent fruit juice; sports drinks	Whole milk; regular soda; sweetened iced teas and lemonade; fruit drinks with less than 100 percent fruit juice

*Though some of the foods in this row are lower in fat and calories, all sweets and snacks need to be limited so as not to exceed one's daily calorie requirements.

**Vegetable and olive oils contain no saturated *or trans* fats and can be consumed daily, but in limited portions, to meet daily calorie needs (about 6 teaspoons a day for the 2,000-calorie level). *(HHS/USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans)*

Source: Adapted from CATCH: Coordinated Approach to Child Health, 4th Grade Curriculum, University of California and Flaghouse, Inc., 2002.

"A Spoonful (or More) of Sugar"

Fat has twice as many calories as protein or carbohydrate, so it's easy to see why cutting back on fat can help control weight. But why should we cut back on added sugar?

Sugar is present naturally in some foods (like the fructose in fruit or the lactose in milk). It's also added to foods at the table or during processing and preparation (like the high-fructose corn syrup in sweetened beverages and breakfast cereal). Health experts have several reasons for saying that we should cut back on added sugar:

- Studies show that people who consume many foods and drinks with added sugar tend to consume more calories than people who consume fewer of these foods. They also show a link between weight gain and drinking sweetened beverages. Cutting back on added sugars, especially from sweetened beverages such as regular soda and fruit punch, can help you and your family maintain a healthy weight.

- Added sugar provides calories but no additional nutrients. An eating plan that helps you and your family maintain a healthy weight is one that focuses on getting plenty of nutrients within your calorie needs.

- Many children and teens, especially girls, don't get enough calcium, a mineral that's important for strong bones and teeth and other body functions. Giving your children fat-free or low-fat milk instead of sweetened beverages can give their bodies a boost.

Focus on Portion Size

Anyone who has eaten out lately is likely to notice how big the portions are. It's hard to find "small" anymore—"supersize" is more like it. Sometimes your plate arrives, and there's enough food for two or even three people. These ever-larger portions have changed what we think of as a "normal" portion, and that affects how much we eat at home as well. Cutting back on portion size is a surefire way to help keep energy IN and energy OUT in balance:

- Order a medium pizza instead of a large. Everyone gets the same number of slices as before; they're just smaller.
- Order an appetizer instead of an entrée at a restaurant.
- Use tall, narrow glasses instead of short, wide glasses. You will drink less.
- Put a smaller portion on a smaller plate; it won't look so skimpy.
- Share a portion with a family member or friend.
- Instead of giving your child an entire bottle of fruit juice or soda, pour a small amount (½ cup) into a cup.

What's the Difference Between a Portion and a Recommended Serving Size?

Portion

A "portion" is the amount of a food that you choose to eat for a meal or snack. It can be big or small—you decide.

How to Use the Nutrition Facts Label

Serving

A "serving" is a measured amount of food or drink, such as one slice of bread or 1 cup of milk. Some foods that most people consume as a single serving actually contain multiple serving sizes (e.g. a 20-ounce soda, or a 3-ounce bag of chips). Nutrition recommendations use serving sizes to help people know how much of different types of foods they should eat to get the nutrients they need. The Nutrition Facts Label on packaged foods also lists a serving size. The serving sizes on packaged foods are not always the same as those included in nutrition recommendations. However, serving sizes are standardized to make it easier to compare similar foods. To get an idea of how big recommended serving sizes really are, check out NHLBI's Serving Size Card at **http://hin.nhlbi.nih.gov/portion/servingcard7.pdf.** And, for help on using the Nutrition Facts Label, visit the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Web site at **www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/foodlab.html#see1**.

My, How They've Grown!

Here are just a few examples of how much average portion sizes have grown over the past 20 years. For more eye-opening examples, visit NHLBI's Portion Distortion website at **http://hin.nhlbi.nih.gov/portion/index.htm**

	20 Years Ago	
	Portion	**Calories**
Bagel	3" diameter	140
Cheeseburger	1	333
Spaghetti and meatballs	1 cup spaghetti; 3 small meatballs	500
Soda	6.5 ounces	85
Blueberry muffin	1.5 ounces	210

	Today	
	Portion	**Calories**
Bagel	6" diameter	350
Cheeseburger	1	590
Spaghetti and meatballs	2 cup spaghetti; 3 large meatballs	1,020
Soda	20 ounces	250
Blueberry muffin	5 ounces	500

TIP:

For more information and tips about food choices and portion sizes that can help you and your family maintain a healthy weight, check out the following Web sites:

- NHLBI's Keep an Eye on Portion Size: **http://hin.nhlbi.nih.gov/portion/keep.htm**
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture (HHS/USDA) Dietary Guidelines for Americans: **www.health-ierus.gov/ dietaryguidelines**

5-Energy OUT: Physical Activity and Screen Time

Americans aren't very physically active. They sit a lot and spend hours in front of TVs, video games, and computers. Studies show that people often eat when they are in front of a screen, and that habit can be a double whammy for a person's weight—very little energy OUT to burn off all that energy IN.

To maintain a healthy weight, being physically active is just as important as eating right. ***We Can!*** benefit a lot from physical activity. It can:

- Keep your body healthy.
- Burn off calories, which can help you stay at a healthy weight.
- Make your bones and muscles strong.
- Make you feel energetic.
- Build strength and endurance.
- Help relieve stress.
- Help you sleep better.
- Help your mental health.

- Help you feel good about yourself.
- Give you something to do when you are bored.
- Be a fun way to spend time with family and friends.

How Much Physical Activity Should We Get?

The HHS/USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that children and teens be physically active for at least 60 minutes on most, if not all, days.

The Guidelines also recommend that adults engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity, above usual activity, on most days of the week in order to reduce the risk of chronic disease in adulthood. And 60 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity on most days of the week will help adults avoid gradual weight gain.

Combined with eating right, this level of physical activity can help you and your children stay at a healthy weight and prevent gradual weight gain over time.

Sometimes, Life Gets in the Way… But It Doesn't Have To.

Trying to get in 60 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity on most days may seem like a lot. But you can do it, and doing it with the family can make it easier.

Get Away From the Screen

- Turn off Saturday morning cartoons and take your child roller-blading or to the zoo.
- Make a family agreement to limit TV/DVD/video watching or gaming to 2 hours (or less) a day.
- Play with a ball instead of a video game.
- Take the TV out of your child's bedroom.

Make Screen Time Active Time

- If you do watch TV, stretch, do yoga, or even lift weights at the same time.
- Have a contest with your children. Who can do the most push-ups or jumping jacks during a commercial break?
- Pop in your favorite aerobics exercise tape or DVD to get your heart pumping!

Make Family Time Active Time

- Bike to the library together.
- Go to your children's sports events and cheer for them. Have them come to yours and cheer for you.
- Celebrate a birthday or anniversary with something active—a hike, a volleyball game, a Frisbee™ match.
- Make a plan with your spouse or child to train together to walk or run a 5K race.

Be Physically Active in Small Chunks

- Instead of e-mailing or phoning colleagues, walk to their offices and back again.
- Challenge your child to jump rope for 5 minutes. When he or she is done, enjoy a big hug and then you try it!
- Play outside with the dog for 20 minutes after work.

Kick It Up a Notch

- When you're out walking, pick up your pace. Go faster than you usually do.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator or escalator. Jog up the stairs rather than walk.
- Play singles tennis rather than doubles.
- If you swim laps, do the last two as fast as you can. Finish in a glorious burst of speed!

Did You Know!

- Every day, on average, 8 to 18-year-olds spend
  - Nearly 4 hours watching TV, videos, DVDs, and prerecorded shows
  - Just over an hour on the computer
  - About 50 minutes playing video games
- 2/3 of young people have a TV in their bedroom; have a video game player and nearly 1/3 have a computer in their bedroom
- Youth who have TVs in their rooms spend almost 1½ hours or more a day watching TV than youth without a set in their room.

Source: Henry J. Kaiser Foundation. Generation M: Media in the Lives of 8-18 Year Olds, March 2005. **www.kff.org/entmedia/entmedia030905pkg.cfm**

A Handy Guide to Calories Burned in Common Activities

This chart shows how many calories you would burn in 30 minutes for these common activities:

Activity	Calories Burned Per 30 minutes*
Walking (Leisurely), 2 miles per hour	85
Walking (Brisk), 4 miles per hour	170
Gardening	135
Raking Leaves	145
Dancing	190
Bicycling (Leisurely) 10 miles per hour	205
Swimming Laps, medium level	240
Jogging, 5 miles per hour	275

*For a healthy 150-pound person. A lighter person burns fewer calories; a heavier person burns more.

Each of these activities burns approximately 150 calories*:

Examples of moderate amounts of physical activity		
Common Chores	**Sporting Activities**	**Less Vigorous, More Time** ↑
Washing and waxing a car for 45–60 minutes	Playing volleyball for 45–60 minutes	
Washing windows or floors for 45–60 minutes	Playing touch football for 45 minutes	
Gardening for 30–45 minutes	Walking 1½ miles in 35 minutes (20 minutes/mile)	
Wheeling self in wheelchair 30–40 minutes	Basketball (shooting baskets) 30 minutes	
Pushing a stroller 1½ miles in 30 minutes	Bicycling 5 miles in 30 minutes	
Raking leaves for 30 minutes	Dancing fast (social) for 30 minutes	
Shoveling snow for 15 minutes	Walking 2 miles in 30 minutes (15 minutes/mile)	
Stairwalking for 15 minutes	Water aerobics for 30 minutes	
	Swimming laps for 20 minutes	
	Basketball (playing game) for 15–20 minutes	
	Bicycling 4 miles in 15 minutes	
	Jumping rope for 15 minutes	
	Running 1½ miles in 15 minutes (10 minutes/mile)	↓ **More Vigorous, Less Time**

* Source: Adapted from Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity, 2001; **www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/obesity/**

6-Resources

Congratulations! If you've come to this point in the ***We Can!*** *Families Finding the Balance: A Parent Handbook*, you've got everything you need to start—or continue—helping your family maintain a healthy weight. If you're ready to try additional ideas or want other ***We Can!*** ways to help your family eat well and get more physically active, call 1-866-35-WECAN or visit the ***We Can!*** Web site at **http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov.** The Web site is full of information about maintaining a healthy weight, nutrition, and physical activity. You also can visit the Web site for recipes, healthy tips, and additional resources.

Check out these other great resources:

NHLBI, **www.nhlbi.nih.gov**

- Aim For a Healthy Weight, **www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/lose_wt/index.htm**
- Portion Distortion Quiz, **http://hin.nhlbi.nih.gov/portion**
- Body Mass Index (BMI) Calculator, **www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi**
- Heart Healthy Latino Recipes, **www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/other/sp_recip.htm**
- Heart Healthy Home Cooking African American Style, **www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/other/chdblack/cooking.htm**

NIDDK, **www.niddk.nih.gov**

- Weight-control Information Network, **http://win.niddk.nih.gov**

NICHD, **www.nichd.nih.gov**

- Milk Matters, **www.nichd.nih.gov/milk**

NCI, **www.nci.nih.gov**

- Cancer Control PLANET, **http://cancercontrolplanet.cancer.gov/physical_activity.html**
- Eat 5-to-9 a Day, **http://5aday.gov/homepage/index_content.html**
- Body and Soul, **http://5aday.nci.nih.gov/about/print_key_soul.html**

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National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases
National Institute of Child Health and Human Development
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