



Hints for Healthy Holidays

- Make physical activity part of your family's tradition. Try an annual Turkey Trot, a long family walk between your holiday dinner and dessert, or walk through a neighborhood where everyone decorates for the holidays and vote for your family favorites.
- Don't deny yourself your favorite holiday foods, just keep portions small.
- Eat a healthy meal or snack before attending holiday parties; you'll eat less of the unhealthy offerings if you aren't already hungry when you arrive.

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Child Feeding: What You Should Know

It's too bad kids don't come with feeding instructions! With all the advertising and nutrition advice out there it is easy to be overwhelmed. We know that what children eat is important to their health and development, but what are the best foods and how do we get our kids to eat them? Whether your problem is a picky eater or a child who eats too much of the wrong foods, the solution could be a change in the way you feed your child.

Preschool children are experimenting with independence in many ways. As parents and caretakers our role is to help them towards independence while providing the structure and support they need to make good choices. Making decisions about what they will eat is one way children of this age assert their independence, but adults still have an important role to play.

By dividing the responsibility for feeding, children can learn to make their own food choices and experience the consequences in a supportive environment. When parents and children know their roles and what to expect, there is less conflict over food and everyone can enjoy the family meal.

Parents' responsibilities:

- **When** – Establish consistent times for meals and snacks rather than allowing access to food at any time. Most children are happier with a routine and will become hungry at meal times. Plan for 3 meals and 2 snacks.
- **Where** – Have your scheduled meals and snacks at a designated space. This allows children to focus on their food choices without the distraction of activities, play, or T.V. Sitting at a table helps children focus on eating and encourages "table manners".
- **What** – Offer children a variety of healthy meals and snacks. It is okay to include occasional treats but make sure to include plenty of fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Children should not dictate the contents of meals or snacks.



Children's responsibilities

- **Whether** – Children should decide for themselves whether they will eat a certain food or not. Continue to offer foods that have been rejected, it often takes many exposures before a child will try a new food.
- **How much** – Serve child-size portions, and let your child ask for more. Allow your child to eat as much as he/she wants of any food. Though it is tempting to limit sweets, your child must and will learn to manage them.

The holidays offer many opportunities for unscheduled snacking and treats, but just like a missed bedtime, interrupted feeding schedules can result in a fussy child. Do your best to keep your routine during this busy time.

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Research on the Role of Parenting

Decisions about the foods you keep in your home and offer your children directly affect their diets, especially during early childhood when children have little independent access to food. Opportunities for physical activity are largely dependent on parents. Child feeding practices can have a huge affect on a child's current and future relationship with food. Even the example you set with your own diet and exercise choices can affect your child. While it is easy to see how parenting choices related to food or exercise could affect your child's weight, new research shows that parenting style itself influences a child's risk for overweight and obesity.

Parenting style is typically defined by a combination of parental control, expectations and sensitivity and reflects all parent-child interactions, not just those related to food. One recent study linking parenting style with overweight children has garnered a lot of attention. The study categorized mothers of first graders into 4 parenting styles based on 2 scales: sensitivity to their child and expectations for their child's self-control. The researchers took height and weight measurements and calculated Body Mass Index (BMI) for each mother's child, categorizing those with a BMI above the 95th percentile as overweight. Even when common risk factors for overweight were taken into account, the mother's parenting style had a significant association with the overweight status of her child.

Other studies exploring the affect of parenting style on overweight in specific populations have found similar results. "Democratic parenting style" and poor family communication were found to be associated with increased BMI in a California study of Chinese-Americans. In a study of Latino children in kindergarten



Photo by Suzanne Paisley, U.C. Davis

through second grade monitoring and positive reinforcement were associated with healthy eating and exercise. In the same study "appropriate discipline" was associated with healthy eating while strict control was associated with unhealthy eating.

Optimal parenting requires a delicate balance. Parents must provide structure for their children, but they must also allow their children to make choices for themselves. Allowing this freedom of choice in an environment where parents control the options and the consequences nurtures the child's independence and confidence so they will be better equipped to make smart decisions when they are on their own and their options are limitless.

Parenting Style	Description	Sensitivity	Expectation	Obesity Risk
Authoritative	Sets clear boundaries, respects child's opinion	High	High	Low (1X)
Authoritarian	Strict disciplinarian, My way or the highway	Low	High	High (5X)
Permissive	Little discipline, indulgent	High	Low	Medium (2X)
Neglectful	Few rules, uninvolved	Low	Low	Medium (2X)

References:

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Chen JL, Kennedy C. "Factors associated with Obesity in Chinese-American children." *Pediatric Nursing*. 2005 Mar-Apr; 31(2): 110-5.

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this season...
Give the Gift of Health
 to your family, friends, and your community

As you put together your holiday gift list, consider boosting the health and vitality of your friends, family, and community with a gift of healthy food. By purchasing healthful locally grown products, you offer nutritious and delicious food to your loved ones and preserve the environment by keeping open space devoted to agriculture in your community.



Subscribing your loved ones to a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) is a wonderful way to provide a box of colorful and nutritious food on a regular basis, directly from a farm of your choice. Contact the following local farms directly to find out more about subscribing to their CSA:

- Eat Outside the Box (925) 952 9643
- Eatwell Farm (800) 648 9894
- Full Belly Farm (800) 791 2110
- Farm Fresh to You (530) 796 3344
- Riverdog (530) 796 3802
- Terra Firma (530) 756 2800



You could also put together your own delicious and nutritious seasonal gift basket! Visit your

local farmers' markets to find fresh leafy winter greens, hardy root vegetables, pomegranates, persimmons, almonds, walnuts, pistachios, jams and jellies from fresh local fruit, raw local honey (a great allergy preventative), and the first virgin olive oil press of the year!

Staying Healthy Through the Holidays

The Holiday Season is around the corner. For some, this is an opportunity to splurge and eat high fat, high sugar and salty foods - just the thought of savoring these foods can make our mouths water. The average person gains almost 2 pounds from Thanksgiving to New Years. While this may seem trivial, the weight is rarely lost during the rest of the year. Pounds can add up over the years and those already overweight or obese are likely to gain more than the average 1 or 2 pounds. Over the past three decades the obesity rate has more than doubled for pre-school children (age two to five) and teens and 65% of adults are now overweight or obese. Few can afford to gain this holiday weight.

Is it possible to enjoy holiday goodies without putting on a single pound? YES! Keep your portions under control by using the USDA MyPyramid recommended serving sizes, add color and variety to your table with healthy fruits and vegetables, and try some new ways to make your family's favorite dishes just a bit healthier. Here are some tips to help you stay healthy through the holidays:

1. Roast your veggies!

A low calorie way to get the most flavors out of your sweet potatoes and squash: roast in the oven at 350 until soft.

2. Toss your beans!

Use olive oil and lemon to season this year's string beans.

3. Keep the peel!

Don't peel the apples for your pie. The skin will provide much needed fiber.

4. Slim cheese!

Use low-fat cheese for those cheesy sauces and desserts.

5. Mash your potatoes a new way!

Use low-sodium chicken broth instead of milk and butter, or try adding OJ to your sweet potato mash for an extra zing.

References:

"10 Ways to Avoid Holiday Weight Gain," www.webmd.com
 Kellogg Food and Fitness Initiative, Sept 2006.
 USDA. Dietary Guidelines for Americans www.MyPyramid.gov



Promoting Physical Activity This Holiday Season

Not sure what to get that special child in your life? Consider a toy that encourages active play. The early years are critical for the development of motor skills and an inclination for regular physical activity throughout life. Give fun now and a future of good health by choosing a gift that encourages physical activity.

A common misconception is that young children just naturally learn how to run, throw, and catch with competence.

Some Activity Promoting Toys

- Hoppity Ball: a ride-on ball made of thick, durable vinyl.
- Push-Along Block Cart with 36 Blocks
- Jumparoo: A user friendly pogo stick
- Frog Pogo: A jumparoo for smaller children
- Juggling Balls and Scarves Combo Package
- Tough Tire Trike: classic pedaled ride-on
- Tricycle
- Hula Hoop
- Balls of different sizes
- Frisbee
- Jump Rope



References:

NAEYC "Healthy Young Children: Encouraging Good Nutrition and Physical Fitness" Beyond the Journal May 2006 <http://www.journal.naeyc.org/btj/200605>

Little Tikes for Growing Imaginations! <http://www.littletikeschildcare.com>

Are You Game? At www.areyougame.com



Funded by the USDA Food Stamp Program, an equal opportunity provider and employer, through the California Nutrition Network. The Food Stamp Program provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. Helping them buy nutritious food for a better diet. For more information about the California Food Stamp program call 1-800-952-5253.



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