a Place of our own

Preventing Childhood Obesity

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, about 15% of U.S. children are overweight, a number that has more than doubled in the last twenty years. The good news is, you can establish healthy habits early on that will help to prevent the problem. **Here's how:**

Help Children Eat Healthy

Let children help prepare what they eat.
Children are more likely to eat things that they have helped prepare.

Serve lots of vegetables, fruit, and low-fat protein.
Make every plate a rainbow that includes a variety of different food groups. Strive for 5 servings of fruit and vegetables each day. Encourage children to help you count.

Encourage, but don't force children to try new foods.
Don't give up when a child refuses. It isn't unusual for it to take 10 or 12 exposures for a child to sample something new. Keep making the food available and maybe they will try it next time. Make new foods fun by arranging them in decorative ways on a child's plate or including them as part of a dish the child already likes.

Model healthy eating.
Let children see you eating the things you want them to eat and use fast food or foods high in fat or sugar only as a last resort or for special occasions (e.g., having fruit for dessert and saving cake for a birthday celebration).

Keep healthy snacks within reach all day.
Prepare things like carrot or celery sticks before the day begins, and keep them in places that children can easily get to by themselves when they feel hungry.

Serve age-appropriate portions.
Eat smaller meals & snacks throughout the day rather than big meals at breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

Avoid using food as a reward or punishment.
Instead, help children learn that the purpose of food is to nourish our bodies.

Help Children Play Healthy

- Offer children the chance to be physically active for at least one hour each day.
- Limit screen time (TV, video and computer) and offer active, fun play alternatives.
- Avoid eating in front of the TV.

Making fun of or scolding over-weight children is never helpful.
Instead, help them eat healthy and get active. Let children know that their value as people isn't determined by their size.

To learn more, watch ***A Place of Our Own*** on California public television stations and visit the website at www.aplaceofourown.org.

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