



Feeding Our Kids

While browsing recently on the World Health Organization's (WHO) website I came across a startling statistic. WHO estimates that there are approximately 20 million children under the age of 5 years of age that are overweight. I had to shake my head when I read that. How could so many little kids be overweight?

I can understand adults being overweight, but 5 year olds? Heck, it's not like your average 5-year old has the ability to drive to their local McDonald's for lunch. Nor do they have the propensity to stop off at Starbucks everyday for a calorie-laden but (I admit) taste-so-good fancy latte. I am also fairly certain that the average 5 year old doesn't do the weekly grocery shopping. So, if this child, or shall I say these 20 million children, lack the ability to control their own environment, including the food that they eat, who is making our kids fat?

Research has consistently shown us that a parents' diet and exercise pattern will predict a child's likelihood of being overweight. The Moms and Dads of the world need to take a long hard look at their kids and then at themselves.

Of course this will be challenging (anything worth striving for is never easy) and I realize that personal and parental responsibilities are complex issues when it comes to a person's health choices and the rearing of their children. But, for your children's sake, parents need to realize that they need to change *their own* personal lifestyles. And if they do not want to for the benefit of their own health, then they need to for the health of their children.

How do you begin to take responsibility? First off it helps to know the fundamental cause of being obesity and overweight. It is a very simple formula of a basic energy imbalance between calories consumed and calories expended. Nothing fancy or earth-shattering and once you understand that simple physiological formula you can then begin to make the necessary changes to your diet and fitness plan.

The American Heart Association recommends this following eating pattern for families and I recommend to begin, or for a lot you, continue adopting a lifestyle that you would be proud to have your child mimicking!

- Energy (calories) should be adequate to support growth and development and to reach or maintain desirable body weight, unfortunately in our society of Big Gulps and Costco grocery shopping we eat way more than what is required.
- Eat foods low in saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, salt (sodium), and added sugars.

- Keep total fat intake between 30 to 35 percent of calories for children 2 to 3 years of age and between 25 to 35 percent of calories for children and adolescents 4 to 18 years of age, with most fats coming from sources of polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fatty acids, such as fish, nuts and vegetable oils.
- Choose a variety of foods to get enough carbohydrates, protein and other nutrients.
- Eat only enough calories to maintain a healthy weight for your height and build. Be physically active for at least 60 minutes a day.
- Serve whole-grain breads and cereals rather than refined grain products. Look for “whole grain” as the first ingredient on the food label and make at least half your grain servings whole grain.
- Serve a variety of fruits and vegetables daily, while limiting juice intake. Each meal should contain at least 1 fruit or vegetable.
- Introduce and regularly serve fish as an entrée. Avoid commercially fried fish.
- Serve nonfat and low-fat dairy foods. From ages 1–8, children need 2 cups of milk or its equivalent each day. Children ages 9–18 need 3 cups.

The American Heart Association has also set out these daily estimates for calories and recommended servings for grains, vegetables, and milk/dairy by age and gender.

	1 Year	2-3 Years	4-8 Years	9-13 Years	14-18 Years
Calories	900kcal	1000kcal			
<i>Female</i>			1200kcal	1600kcal	1800kcal
<i>Male</i>			1400kcal	1800kcal	2200kcal
Fat	30-40% kcal	30-35% kcal	25-35% kcal	25-35% kcal	25-35% kcal
Milk & Dairy	2 cups	2 cups	2 cups	3 cups	3 cups
Lean Meat/Beans	1.5 oz	2oz		5 oz	
<i>Female</i>			3 oz		5 oz
<i>Male</i>			4 oz		6 oz
Fruits	1 cup	1 cup	1.5 cups	1.5 cups	
<i>Female</i>					1.5 cups
<i>Male</i>					2 cups
Vegetables	3/4 cup	1 cup			
<i>Female</i>			1 cup	2 cups	2.5 cups
<i>Male</i>			1.5 cups	2.5 cups	3 cups
Grains	2 oz	3 oz			
<i>Female</i>			4 oz	5 oz	6 oz
<i>Male</i>			5 oz	6 oz	7 oz

- Calorie estimates are based on a sedentary lifestyle. Increased physical activity will require additional calories: by 0-200 kcal/d if moderately physically active; and by 200–400 kcal/d if very physically active.
- Milk listed is fat-free (except for children under the age of 2 years).
- For 1-year-old children, calculations are based on 2% fat milk

Find out more nutrition information, as well as the best exercises you should be doing for your body, under h ur own trainer. Join today and not only reach your fitness goals, but crush them out of the park!