

Friendship and healthy weight—
A recipe for happiness



HEALTHY weight
is something to smile about

take this QUIZ to see if your child is at a healthy weight

Check all statements that are true for your child.

Does your child:

- ☐ become short of breath when climbing stairs?
- ☐ prefer to watch TV or play alone rather than play with others?
- ☐ have a large belly or rolls of fat?
- ☐ have a nickname like "gordito" or "chubs"?
- ☐ seem "puffy" in the face or neck?
- ☐ have trouble running and playing?
- ☐ wear a size larger than her age?
(For example, size 4T pants at age 2)
- ☐ get teased about his weight?

Do you or family members say your child:

- ☐ is "stocky", "chunky", "thick", "solid" or "big boned"?
- ☐ will outgrow his weight?
- ☐ has to be big to be healthy?
- ☐ has "bad genes" or "slow metabolism"?
- ☐ is like other relatives who are large or heavy?

If you checked more than three items above, it may be time to take action.

Tips to help your child be at a healthy weight:

- ☐ Take a walk each day.
- ☐ Offer water instead of soda, fruit drinks, or juice.
- ☐ Buy low-fat instead of regular milk.
- ☐ Serve child-sized amounts of food.
- ☐ Suggest active play instead of watching TV.
- ☐ Serve low-fat milk with meals instead of juice.
- ☐ Offer bananas, mangos, and apples rather than candy, cake, and cookies.
- ☐ Reward your child for good behavior with a trip to the playground.
- ☐ Set a timer for 30 minutes. Turn off the TV when the 30 minutes are up.
- ☐ Buy whole-wheat bread.
(The extra fiber helps kids feel full.)
- ☐ Crunch on carrots rather than chips.
- ☐ Encourage your child not to overeat.
- ☐ Skip bedtime snacks.
- ☐ Spoil them with love rather than food.
- ☐ Treat them with a game of soccer rather than ice cream and candy.
- ☐ Ask loving family members to help your child by offering fruit instead of candy.
- ☐ Plan family events around activities rather than food.
- ☐ Dance and sing with your child during TV commercials.



WIC Nutrition Program
1-800-WIC-1007
Nutrition Division
MA Department of Public Health
TDD/TTY: 617.624.5992

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington D.C. 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). "The USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer."

A close-up photograph of a tulip flower with red and yellow petals, growing from a small pot. A black showerhead is positioned above the flower, spraying water over it. The background is a solid reddish-brown color.

The right foods today are the
roots for a healthy tomorrow.

grow a healthy child

a healthy tomorrow starts with the right food today

Breakfast:

- ☐ Serve low-fat milk in a cup or glass.
- ☐ Offer whole wheat bread, toast, or WIC cereal.
- ☐ Cook an egg.
- ☐ Offer yogurt with fruit.

Lunch and Dinner:

- ☐ Serve low-fat milk in a cup or glass.
- ☐ Offer at least one veggie.
- ☐ Provide at least one fruit.
- ☐ Try brown rice or whole-wheat pasta.
- ☐ Offer small amounts of meat, beans, or peanut butter.

Snacks:

- ☐ Provide fruit and vegetables instead of candy, cakes, or cookies.
- ☐ Serve WIC cereal.
- ☐ Encourage children to drink water.

Meal Time Tips:

- ☐ Eat together as a family.
- ☐ Talk about your day.
- ☐ Offer small amounts of food.
- ☐ Offer food without commenting on how much your child eats.
- ☐ Refrain from encouraging kids to clean their plates.
- ☐ Take a walk together after the meal.
- ☐ Encourage children to help with meal preparation.





Set the table
for the entire
family. Set
roots for a
lifetime.

you eat. you talk. you listen.
you laugh. you learn.

FAMILY MEALS: more than just eating together

"When I was growing up, we didn't get called twice to the dinner table. Mom let us know that family meals were important and we'd better be there on time. That's when we connected as a family and got closer to each other.

I now have three children of my own. My life feels like it's stuck in fast-forward! But I want my children to have sweet memories of family meals so I make time for us to eat together at least once every day.

Nothing earth-shaking happens during our family meals. We talk. Laugh. Clean up spills. Share. Smile. But I know those tiny threads of togetherness weave us into a family.

Sometimes grandparents, aunts and uncles join us for meals. I'm thankful that we can celebrate the simple pleasure of eating together again. I want to give my children the same gift my parents gave me: a family that cares enough to enjoy each other daily."



Ygra, with daughter Nabrioska

Ygra's tips for making family meals easier:

- Prepare meals for the week on Sunday. Freeze them for quick meals throughout the week.
- Ask older children to wash vegetables. They will enjoy eating them more if they helped prepare them.
- Use the crock-pot to slow-cook stews, soups, and roasts. Come home to great smells and tastes.
- Kids love picnics anytime, even in the winter. Spread a blanket on the floor. (Hint: Even left-over food tastes great when served picnic style.)
- Turn off the TV so you can focus on your family.



WIC Nutrition Program
1-800-WIC-1007
Nutrition Division
MA Department of Public Health
TDD/TTY: 617.624.5992

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington D.C. 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). "The USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer."

weigh your OPTIONS for good nutrition



Too much milk and juice
can tip a healthy diet.

variety is the SPICE OF LIFE

"Being a mom can be overwhelming. You get advice from everyone. You want to do right by your child but sometimes you're just tired. It's tempting to take the easy way out.

My son Angel is three years old. The doctor told me to introduce vegetables and fruit at six months. He said children learn to like veggies and fruits when they taste them early and see their family eating them. That made sense to me.

To my surprise, friends and relatives didn't agree. They said that children couldn't eat foods—even baby foods—until they had teeth. Instead, they said to give Angel formula since it was easier and cleaner.

Angel ate veggies and fruit for six months before his first tooth appeared. And he still eats them. He eats broccoli, spinach, carrots—everything. When moms ask me how I got him to love veggies, I share this secret: Offer your child veggies and fruit at 4-6 months. Don't wait until their teeth appear because children don't need teeth to eat food.

It may be easier to give babies formula all day rather than foods. But being a good mother means thinking more about your child than about yourself. I do things for Angel's future, not for my convenience. I may clean up more food messes now but Angel will have healthy food habits for a lifetime.

To my family, food is love. The more you give, the more you love. Relatives encouraged me to give Angel overwhelming amounts of food. But his doctor said to offer only kid-sized servings. Again, I was caught in the middle.

Relatives encouraged me to give Angel overwhelming amounts of food. But his doctor said to offer only kid-sized servings.

At first, I listened to my family. I encouraged Angel to eat more, even when he seemed full. He ended up playing with his food, making messes, and being upset with me. Dinnertime is our only quality time together as a family so I didn't want it to be a battlefield.

Next, I decided to act on my doctor's advice. I offered only small amounts of food without any encouragement to eat more. Some days Angel eats a lot, and on other days he eats only a small amount. I don't worry because I trust him to know how much he needs. Now, dinner time is peaceful and Angel is the perfect size.

I feel sorry for children who are "big boned" or overweight. They can't run and play with their friends. I don't want that for Angel. When we go anywhere—even camping—I take healthy foods like mangos, grapes, and carrots instead of chips and candy.



I still get advice from relatives but it doesn't bother me anymore. I know they want what's best for Angel. But I'm the mom. My son trusts me to get things right. I'm going to do everything possible to be sure Angel gets lots of healthy foods. And I trust him to decide how much is right for him. It sounds like a winning strategy to me."

— Carolina, mother of Angel



Remind Grandma that
kids only need the right
amount of healthy foods.



spoil them with hugs,
NOT WITH TREATS

TESTIMONIAL: mom knows best, and can teach the rest

"I'm lucky. My daughter Emily has two sets of loving grandparents that live ten minutes away. They even provide child care for her while I'm at work. We get along great.

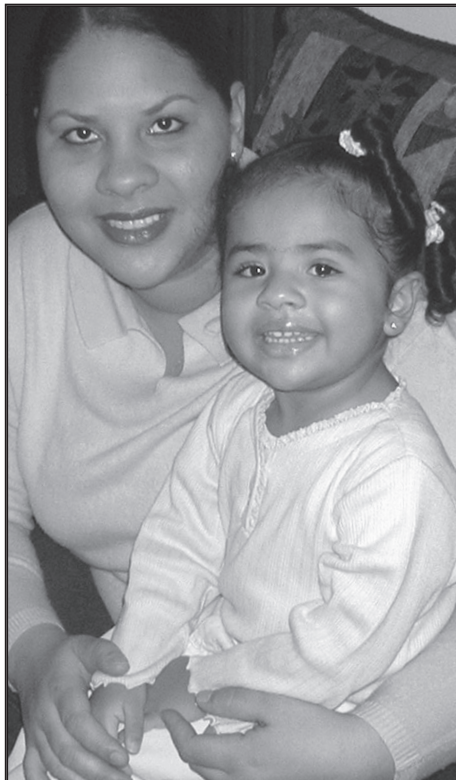
It was challenging in the beginning. Grandmothers think they know what's best for babies and sometimes their beliefs are different than what doctors advise. New moms are forced to choose between the mom they love and the doctor they respect. That's what happened to me.

When Emily was three months old, Mom promised that cereal would make her sleep through the night. My doctor recommended no foods until she was four months old. My Mom's response: 'Doctors don't know everything.'

My mother-in-law wanted Emily to eat rice and beans at six months. 'Better to introduce babies to everything early so they won't be picky eaters,' she said. My doctor warned that solid foods could result in choking and allergies. My mother-in-law's response: 'It didn't hurt any of my kids.'

It took a few days until I realized what I had to do. I had to firmly but gently put my foot down. I was now the mother. I had to insist that my parents and in-laws do what I wanted for my child.

It helped to ask both grandmothers to attend Emily's doctor appointments so they could hear her words first hand. They loved hearing how smart and healthy she



Damaris, with daughter Emily

was; that added credibility to the doctor's words.

When I returned to work, I packed all the food, cereal, juice and snacks for Emily each day. Sure, they had most of the same foods at their homes but this allowed me to choose what she ate. My Mom realized that I was serious about what Emily ate, and surprisingly she went along with my choices.

Notes are a good way to remind grandmothers about your choices without being 'in their face.' I sent notes that told what, how much, and when Emily should be fed.

To my mother, a heavy child is a healthy child. Her motto is 'feed, feed, feed.' I want Emily to be regular weight. Layers of body fat earn

nicknames like 'fatso', which are not flattering. It was tough to break old habits, like insisting children clean their plates, or encouraging them to eat more, but firm reminders let my parents know I was serious.

My extended family loves to give Emily candy. To them, it's love. For me, it's a problem. I had a lot of dental work done when I was young and I don't want that for Emily. I asked them firmly but politely to stop—and they did. I guess they know deep down that candy isn't a good thing for any child and that there are other ways to show love. They just need reminders now and then.

Emily can count on me—and my family—to make sure she's healthy and happy."



WIC Nutrition Program
1-800-WIC-1007
Nutrition Division
MA Department of Public Health
TDD/TTY: 617.624.5992

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington D.C. 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). "The USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer."



good food can
SURPRISE you

Make healthy
food a part of
everyday life.

GOOD ADVICE about making healthy food part of YOUR everyday life

Dear Maria:

I love my mother-in-law, but she's driving me crazy! She thinks children should be "clean and not too thin." I agree that children should be clean. But children that look "not too thin" to my mother-in-law look fat to me. She gives my daughter huge amounts of food at every meal and encourages her to clean her plate. I've struggled all my life with weight and know how painful it is. I don't want that for my daughter. How can I get my mother-in-law to see that "not too thin" is really fat?

Love, No Time for the Weight

Dear No Time for the Weight:

Perhaps it's time for a respectful, kind conversation. Start by telling her you love her. (It's OK to exaggerate a bit here.) Thank her for all she does for you and your family. Explain that children needed extra weight many years ago to survive common diseases like pneumonia, influenza, and tuberculosis. But

times have changed. Excess body weight (fat) will likely be the biggest health challenge to today's child, since overweight children grow up to be overweight adults.

Ask for advice on how you can work together to assure that your daughter's weight will be normal. Share tips on what you're doing, like serving small amounts of food and not commenting on how much she eats. Together, you are a powerful force that can give your child the best gift of all: a love for healthy foods and being active.

Love, Maria

Dear Maria:

I love sweets. Just thinking about candy makes me smile. I crave candy all the time. But I want to be a good role model for my son so he learns to like vegetables. What can I do so my son doesn't grow up in candyland?

Love, Sweet Caroline

Dear Sweet Caroline:

Daily doses of candy can leave a bad taste in your mouth. (And extra fat around the waist.) You're wise to take steps now to help your son.

Children learn to like sweets more when they are given as a reward. When your son behaves in the store or picks up his toys, give him your attention instead of a candy bar. Try reading a book, singing a silly song, or going on an adventure walk. He wants you, not sugar.

The best way to get kids to eat veggies is to serve them often, even if they don't eat them at first. Your son loves you so much that he wants to do what you do, including eating vegetables. Show him you love veggies and he will too.

Love, Maria



WIC Nutrition Program
1-800-WIC-1007
Nutrition Division
MA Department of Public Health
TDD/TTY: 617.624.5992

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington D.C. 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). "The USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer."

Photography by
Michael Young
www.yamstudio.com