

Tune In for Healthy Youth

Fact Sheet

Tune In for Healthy Youth focuses on assisting youth in developing the ability to identify and act on appropriate internal cues for eating and to act respectfully towards self and others. Also, it is very important that adults model healthy eating and physical activity behaviors for the young people in their lives.

Why is this important?

Overweight is a particular concern for adolescents because it affects both physical and emotional well-being during adolescence and into adulthood.

- Many obese children and adolescents are at risk for Type 2 diabetes, a condition most often related to obesity, and once seen only in adults. Type 2 diabetes accounts for up to 95 percent of all diabetes cases, and is the main cause of kidney failure, limb amputations and new-onset blindness in adults and a major cause of heart disease and stroke.
- Eighty-five percent of obese adolescents will become obese adults, and obese teens are more likely than obese younger children to be obese as adults.
- Odds for obese youth to attain ideal body weight as adults are grim: if a child is obese at age 12, the odds are 4:1 against attaining ideal body weight; if an adolescent is obese at age 19; the odds are 28:1 against attaining ideal body weight.
- Being picked on or bullied because of one's weight can cause emotional torment to some youth and may, in fact, discourage them from pursuing sports and other lifestyle changes necessary to reach and maintain a healthy weight.
- The perception of being fat and being dissatisfied with their physical appearance may lead adolescent girls and boys to unhealthy weight control behaviors, such as unsupervised dieting, diet aids (e.g. anabolic steroids, untested dietary supplements), fasting, self-induced vomiting and use of tobacco as an appetite suppressant.
- Boys may be stigmatized because of small stature or thinness.

How Can Parents and Adults Who Care About Teens Help ?

Ensure an atmosphere at home, school and in the community that promotes self-respect for all members.

- Do not allow criticizing, bullying, name-calling or shaming about weight or size
- Promote realistic body image
- Identify community counseling services for overweight children or youth and provide as needed

Encourage youth to eat in response to appropriate body signals.

- Help youth identify non-hunger triggers for eating (e.g., emotions, boredom, food availability/attractiveness, advertising)
- Teach youth to identify advertising that pressures individuals to buy foods and beverages high in calories and low in nutrients
- Organize parties around fun activities rather than food
- Do not encourage “clean plate” syndrome
- Use non-food items as rewards and prizes
- Do not use or restrict food as punishment
- Avoid pressuring youth about how much and what to eat
- Help youth learn to eat only when they’re hungry

Serve as a role model to youth by eating healthy and being physically active.

- Serve foods such as fruits, vegetables and low fat dairy foods daily
- Adopt and model healthy eating behaviors
- Refrain from making negative remarks about your own weight or the weight of others
- Encourage increased physical activity by finding ways to be active with your children
- Be a good example by eating only when hungry
- Establish a regular physical activity program for yourself
- Seek weight management counseling for yourself if needed