

Healthy, Happy Families: Try These Six Tips

One of my neighbors and her husband started a weight loss program one year ago. Together, they have lost over 80 pounds. More importantly, by changing their eating and exercise habits, they have also changed their kids' habits. Because children with overweight parents tend to be overweight themselves, it is crucial to make family-wide changes to help everyone achieve a healthy weight. Incorporate these six tips into your family's lifestyle, and in only a few weeks you may notice that you *and* your kids may drop a few pounds while your energy levels increase.

Use smaller plates for meals. Dinner plates today average 11-12 inches across; that's 2-3 inches larger than plates from just a few years ago! Use 9 inch plates, and you'll eat less food because *it looks like more food*. A big part of eating is the visual experience of seeing a plate full of delicious food. Use a smaller plate, eat less, and you're still satisfied.

Portion food into smaller serving sizes. Did you know you can ask your favorite pizza parlor to double cut the pizza, so you get twice the number of pieces? Two pieces of double-cut pizza equal one typical slice, yet I bet you'll find you're satisfied with just one of the smaller slices. Serve half of a sandwich instead of a whole sandwich and cut chicken and steak into smaller pieces. If you plan to purchase cookies or crackers choose those that come in small sizes (try goldfish, pretzels or animal crackers) or portion out big bags into single serving bags once you bring them home.

Limit eating to the [kitchen](#) or dining room table where you can't watch TV. Not only does that cut down on crumbs spread throughout the house, but it also reduces random eating. [Watching TV](#) and want a snack? That's fine - as long as you sit at the table.

Establish a beverage guideline. Perhaps you serve fat-free milk with meals and water the rest of the time. Or maybe you have a rule limiting 100% fruit juice to 6 ounces at snacks. Develop a family plan that promotes drinking nutritious yet low-calorie beverages, and keeps sugary, calorie-laden beverages to a minimum. Even better is to choose water which is naturally calorie free.

Instead of dessert every night, establish one night each week to be the designated "dessert night". Take turns planning favorite desserts, making sure you prepare just enough for everyone to enjoy one small serving - and then it's gone.

Plan a family-wide pedometer contest for a week. Each [family](#) member wears a pedometer and keeps track of their daily number of steps. Whoever accumulates the most steps after a week wins a prize (just make sure it's not a food prize!). Repeat once each month and watch your activity levels skyrocket!

For more ways to get your family eating well with [Ten Tips to Help Your Kids Eat More Veggies](#) and living more fit [Fitness and Family](#).