

Your child's weight: helping without harming

Why are you concerned about your child's weight? Is your child large? Does your child have a big appetite? Are other family members large? What do the growth charts say? Is your child growing along a certain percentile, even if it is high?

Chances are, there is no problem. Some children are just big and have big appetites. If your child's weight plots consistently on his growth chart, he is growing normally, even if he is heavier than other children. Also, most children slim down as they get older.



On the other hand, there *could* be a problem. If you make an issue about your child's weight, restrict her food intake and try to slim her down, she will probably eat more and be fatter than is natural for her. Her weight could be going up faster than normal.

How can you to help your child to get the body that nature intended?

Do a good job with parenting and feeding, then let go of it. Maintain a division of responsibility in feeding. Parents do the *what*, *when* and *where* of feeding; children do the *how much* and *whether* of *eating*. Don't make an issue of your child's weight, and don't let others make an issue of it, either. Children who are labeled overweight feel flawed in every way—not smart, not physically capable and not worthy.

Check yourself. Are you doing a good job with feeding and parenting?

- Having regular and reliable sit-down family meals and sit-down snacks?
- Including a variety of good-tasting, wholesome food?
- Regularly including "forbidden" foods at meal and snack time so your child doesn't sneak around and overeat on them?
- Trusting your child to decide *what* and *how much* to eat from the food you provide?
- Feeling good about the child you *have*, not the one you *thought* you might have.
- Maintaining a division of responsibility with activity.
Parents provide *structure*, *safety* and *opportunities*.
Children choose *how much* and *whether* to move and the *manner* of moving.
- Limiting television.

Provide, don't *deprive*, then trust your child to grow up to be the size and shape that is right for him or her. For more help, read Ellyn Satter's *Your Child's Weight: Helping Without Harming*, Kelcy Press, Madison, WI 2005.



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