

Do As I Say AND As I Do—Parents Need To Be Role Models For Healthful Eating

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(NAPSA)—Although the latest statistics estimate that 20 to 30 percent of children are overweight, there are steps parents can take to keep their kids healthy. Research indicates that



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helping children make healthful changes in eating and lifestyle habits requires the coordinated efforts of families, communities and schools.

It's important children learn to eat healthfully at a young age. If you lay the foundation early, they will be more likely to make positive choices—even when they're not at home. It is easier to teach good habits initially than to undo the damage later.

Here are some easy tips:

- **Eat breakfast:** Studies show that kids who eat breakfast do better in school. If kids don't like typical breakfast foods, let them eat leftovers or other foods you know they'll eat. Breakfast is still the most important meal of the day.

- **Eat dinner as a family:** As a parent, you should not only be a healthful food role model, you should take advantage of the social benefits of spending time together.

- **Be a positive example:** Parents need to eat the same thing they're serving their children. It's not a "do as I say, not as I do" situation. For example, it's hard to teach the importance of drinking milk when you sip on a Diet Coke at dinner. It's also important that you don't diet in front of your children; they might begin to think it's normal eating behavior.

- **Food is not a reward or a punishment:** Talking about the importance of staying away from high-fat, high-calorie, high-sugar

foods and then turning around and making these foods the reward they get for doing something right is a "no-no." Using bribes like dessert to get your children to eat their dinner teaches them that the reward must be pretty good and the dinner must be pretty bad. Don't take sweets away as a punishment. Find a different "privilege" to take away, something that isn't food.

- **Demonstrate portion control:** Don't force your children to clean their plate when they aren't hungry—start with small amounts of food. If your children truly want more food out of hunger, offer them more vegetables or a piece of fruit rather than more meat or bread. If they really are hungry, they'll eat what you offer.

- **Snacks are a good thing:** Children ages 1 to 5 have small stomachs and high energy needs. They should have small, frequent meals throughout the day. Snacks should be planned—including at least two food groups (for example, peanut butter and apple slices). Consider this:

Frozen Banana Pops

- 3 bananas
- 6 Popsicle sticks
- ¼ cup peanut butter, softened
- ¼ cup chopped peanuts or walnuts, granola, crispy rice cereal or sunflower seeds

Peel the bananas. Cut them in half, widthwise, and push a Popsicle stick through the cut end of each half. Spread peanut butter on the bananas, then roll them in the nuts, cereal or seeds. Wrap them in waxed paper and freeze for 3 hours. Serves 6.

Nutrition information per serving: Calories 218, Fat 14g, Cholesterol 0, Carbohydrate 18g, Fiber 3g, Protein 6g.



Note to Editors: This story is most relevant to the following states: CA, WA, OR, ID, NV, UT, MT, WY.