

What's a parent to do?

Because portion control and lack of physical activity have been identified as primary causes of childhood obesity, parents need to take control of some areas when their children are very young.

Nothing takes the place of personal responsibility.
Children are incredible imitators.

• **Support your child.** If your child is to make healthy food and lifestyle choices, **they need your encouragement more than anything.** Don't criticize or blame your child for the problem. They get enough criticism from their peers already.

• **Change your behavior.** If you expect your child to make dietary and lifestyle changes, **your whole family must be willing to make the same changes.** There should not be two sets of rules.

• **Get moving.** **Don't expect your child to be active if you aren't active!** There are plenty of activities that parents and children can enjoy together, no matter what the athletic abilities are. Plan family outings that include physical activities, such as walking, biking, or swimming.

• **Practice healthy eating.** Start by **filling your house with healthy food choices.** **If you don't want your child to eat it, don't keep it around!** Don't restrict certain foods entirely, or kids will just want them more. Learn to cut *down*, not *out*!

• **Little changes mean a lot.** **Just a few habit changes in your family can make a big difference.** Discourage kids from eating while watching TV or taking food to other rooms of the house. Eat as a family as much as possible and encourage kids to eat slowly and learn to enjoy good food. Invite children to participate in food choice and preparation.

