



Help Students Achieve and Maintain a Healthy Weight

Tips for School Health Clinic Staff

All students need to eat healthy and be physically active to be healthy students, not just those who may be overweight or underweight. Discuss healthy behaviors with all students so that they can learn strategies for achieving and maintaining a healthy weight throughout life.

What is healthy weight?

Healthy weight is not a number on a scale or growth chart, it is the weight and shape your body naturally takes when you are eating healthy and being physically active.



Screen all students for unsafe dieting practices- skipping meals, fasting, vomiting, laxative or diet

When should I talk with students about healthy weight?

Assess the student's interest in talking about weight first. Is it a concern of theirs? If they are not interested, wait until next visit. If they are concerned about their weight or interested in being healthier, go ahead and start the talk now.

Should I recommend that a child lose/gain weight if they are underweight or overweight?

It is better to focus on healthy behaviors rather than weight change. If a student is eating healthfully and being physically active, they will achieve a weight that is healthy for them.

What type of diet should an overweight child be on?

In general, diets don't work. They often focus on restriction rather than long-term changes that promote a healthy weight throughout life. Furthermore, some diets are dangerous, especially for growing children and teens.

"Healthy bodies come in all shapes and sizes."

"Value your body and do your best to keep it healthy."

"I wish you felt more positive about your body."

"Your body is a good body, I hope you will take good care of it."

Helpful Language for Addressing Student Comments About Weight



What health behaviors should I recommend for healthy weight?

DO!

- Identify lifestyle changes that will promote healthy eating and physical activity.
- Offer support and problem-solving strategies to children who are concerned about their weight.
- Use goal setting with a child to document successes.

DON'T

- Tell a child to go on a diet or to lose weight.
- 'Diagnose' a child as overweight or underweight according to their BMI, without assessing other factors.

- 60 minutes of physical activity a day.
- Less than 2 hours of screen time (TV, computer, video games) per day.
- Eat more fruits and vegetables.
- No more than 1 sugar-sweetened drink (soda, Kool-Aid, lemonade, or fruit punch) per day.
- No more than 1 nutrient-poor snack per day such as cakes, cookies, ice cream, candy, or chips.
- Eat out no more than once a week.
- Encourage non-fat or low fat dairy.
- Choose breads and cereals rich in whole grains.
- Age-appropriate portion sizes.