

# Why guess?

## Clear answers on your child's nutritional needs

The statistics are staggering. An obese 6-year-old has a 50 percent risk of obesity by age 35. And the risk rises to 70 to 80 percent for those who remain significantly overweight at age 10. If that doesn't shock you, consider the life-altering problems associated with childhood obesity: diabetes, asthma, sleep apnea and cardiovascular disease.

Do you need clear answers about your developing child's exercise and nutritional needs?

That's why Columbus Children's Hospital created a simple reference guide called *Ounce of Prevention*. It's a take-along for each well-child visit and offers basic tips and useful information.

For example, an infant's tears often are misinterpreted as a sign of hunger. If you offer baby a bottle each time she sheds a tear, it might lead to overeating. As an alternative, relaxation techniques — such as massaging, rocking, cuddling or listening to music — can alleviate crying and discomfort.

Both short stature and obesity have been tied to excessive juice intake. Juice shouldn't be offered to children who are younger than 6 months of age and shouldn't be served from a bottle. Serve juice in a cup. Kids ages 1 to 6 should drink no more than 4 to 6 ounces per day — and make it 100 percent juice.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends parents delay the introduction of cow's milk until age 1. Cow's milk should be whole milk, not reduced-fat or nonfat, during the second year of life because fat intake shouldn't be restricted during a child's first 24 months.

Children like and eat familiar foods; infants tend to resist those that aren't. You may offer a new food more than 10 times before a child takes to it. Although infants innately prefer sweet and salty foods, your eating habits influence baby's choices.

Set a good example by providing plenty of fruits and veggies. Don't use dessert as a reward or bribe for eating those veggies. Dessert isn't a necessary part of every meal. Consider occasionally using fruit, yogurt or cheese as a healthy substitute.

As baby begins eating solids, beware of choking hazards. Your baby is only learning to chew and coordinate swallows and doesn't have a full set of teeth. Be careful with nuts, grapes, apple chunks, sausages, popcorn, hard chunks of uncooked veggies, round candies, hot dogs and other similar foods.

Split or share meals to control portion size when your family eats out. Consider ordering an appetizer as an entrée, and stop eating when you are full. Avoid super-sized sweetened drinks, and ask for



Photo courtesy of Columbus Children's Hospital

Desserts can be part of a healthy diet but shouldn't be an essential part of every meal. Consider substituting fresh fruit and cheese for cakes, candy and ice cream.

milk with the kids' meals. Eat bread with the meal, not before it. Allow one fried food per meal, and order low-fat dressing, sour cream, gravy and sauces on the side.

Visit [ColumbusChildrens.com](http://ColumbusChildrens.com) and search for "Ounce of Prevention" for more helpful tips. You'll find a detailed guide for each well-child visit, which outlines age-appropriate feeding schedules, food choices, portion sizes and activity levels.

It takes the guesswork out of nutrition so children receive the healthy start they need. Because an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

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Experts from the Center for Healthy Weight and Nutrition at Columbus Children's Hospital provided the information for this column.