

8 to LiVe By

HABIT BUILDER FOR KIDS, TEENS, AND FAMILIES

To reach and keep a healthy weight, build better habits together. The 8 habits prescribed below are the best place to start. Scientific studies show that these have the biggest impact on your weight, your health, and your outlook.

ACTIVITY



1 MOVE MORE

- Everyone needs regular physical activity — regardless of their shape, size, health, or age. Physical activity gives you better energy, stronger muscles, and less stress.
- Kids need **at least 60 minutes of physical activity** every day, and adults need at least 30 minutes — break it up into as little as 10 minutes at a time. You can get most of it from play time, walking or biking to school or work, or family activities.
- Aim for **strength-building exercises twice a week**.

2 LIMIT SCREEN TIME — AND SITTING TIME

- Research links screen time (Internet, TV, video games, notebook, etc.) to a wide range of negative health effects in children and teens — including obesity. That’s in part because screen time is usually spent sitting down instead of running around.
- Make a rule of **no more than 1 to 2 hours a day** in front of a TV or other screen. (Children age 2 and under shouldn’t be watching at all.)

FOOD



3 ALWAYS EAT BREAKFAST — AND MAKE IT HEALTHY

- Eating a healthy breakfast can improve your memory, boost your creativity, raise your test scores — and help you reach and keep a healthy weight.
- Aim for breakfasts that **include these 3 things: whole grains, low-fat dairy or protein, and a fruit or vegetable**. Try combos such as: (cereal + milk + banana) or (omelette with veggies + toast) or (orange + yogurt + bagel).

4 EAT MORE FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

- Fruits and vegetables are full of nutrients that help you learn and grow, prevent disease, and keep up your energy and mood. They’re important for a healthy body weight, too.
- Every day, aim to get **1½ to 2 cups of fruit**, and **2½ to 3 cups of vegetables**. Go for bright reds and oranges, and dark greens.

5 LIMIT — OR ELIMINATE — SWEETENED DRINKS

- Studies suggest that America’s weight problem is linked to America’s “drinking problem” — that is, to our increasing intake of sweetened drinks like sodas and sports drinks. Sweetened drinks are also linked to weak bones and tooth decay.
- Aim for **less than 12 ounces per week** of soda, sports drinks, lemonade, and other sweetened drinks. Limit juice to less than 6 ounces per day. Drink water instead, and aim for 3 glasses of milk each day.

6 EAT MEALS TOGETHER AS A FAMILY — SITTING DOWN

- Children and teens who eat regular meals with their parents are more likely to eat in a balanced way, do well in school, and maintain a healthy weight.
- Aim to **eat dinner together** most nights of the week. Sit down at the table, turn the screens off, and talk!

SLEEP & SUPPORT

7 GET ENOUGH SLEEP

- Getting enough sleep will help you think better, play better, be happier, and manage your weight.
- Preschoolers need about 11 hours (including naps), children need about 10 hours, teens need about 9 hours, and adults need about 7 hours — every single night.



8 BE POSITIVE ABOUT FOOD AND BODY IMAGE

- If you, your friends, or your family obsess about food or body image, you’re more likely to have unhealthy behaviors and an unhealthy body weight.
- Forget “forbidden foods” — all foods can fit in a balanced diet. Just try to eat **more** healthy foods and **less** junk food.
- Watch what you say. **Don’t criticize** your own body — even as a joke. **Don’t compare** your own weight, size, or shape to anyone else’s. Being healthy means being positive.

Making a Healthy Change

There are lots of ways to make a healthy change. You can experiment to find out what way works best for you. First, choose something you want to change — pick something you can get excited about! Then use the questions below to make a plan. Try out your plan for a few weeks and see how it goes. You'll probably need to tweak your plan a few times to get it just right. That's what happens in experiments!

Be sure to share your plan with your healthcare providers so they can help.

This change is for (name): _____ Age: _____ Date: _____

MY PLAN

MY OVERALL GOAL (for example, you could choose one of the 8 habits from the *Habit Builder* on the other side of this page.):

STEPS TO HELP GET THERE:

What action do you want to do? _____

What small steps could help you do this? _____

What could make this easier?

What could change about the places where you live, learn, work, or play? _____

What tools or resources could help? _____

Who could help you or do this with you? _____

What might make this harder? _____

When will you do this? _____

How often? _____

How will you make time for this? _____

What will remind you to do this? _____

How will you keep track of what you do? _____

When will you review how it's going? _____



As you experiment, you'll learn a lot about what works for you. Sometimes you'll feel excited about your plan. Sometimes you'll lose focus and have to get yourself going again. As long as you don't give up, there's NO failure. You'll become your own best expert on how to make healthy changes.