

Kids and adolescents become overweight for many reasons.

It boils down to the fact that they eat more food than they burn off. Children need food to keep their bodies healthy and growing, but if your child eats more than he or she needs, it will cause him to gain weight. Weight gain in kids is usually a combination of eating too much food and not keeping active enough. For example, your child may watch TV all day, rather than going outside to play with friends or ride a bike.

Your child may have health problems because of her weight. Kids with weight problems are likely to get serious diseases, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol levels, and joint problems. A healthy child leads to a healthy adult.

Do not put your child on a diet; rather make changes in what he eats and increase his physical activity. This will help your child use up more of the food that is eaten. Your family can do many things to help decrease the amount of food your child eats to prevent weight gain. Here are some examples:

- **Model good behavior.** Eat a healthy diet and exercise more, and perhaps your child will do the same.
- **Serve more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.** Reduce the amount of snack foods and fast foods eaten.
- **Offer smaller portions.** For example, suggest that your child order a cheeseburger rather than a double cheeseburger. If she eats four pieces of pizza, encourage eating two instead.
- **Pay attention to what your child drinks.** Sodas, fruit punch, and sports drinks are OK in small amounts, but can cause weight gain if used too frequently or even daily (see to the right).
- **Serve breakfast!** Breakfast eaters tend to weigh less than those who skip breakfast.

Sports drinks contain sugar and also small amounts of nutrients. Most experts agree that sports drinks can replenish nutrients (such as sodium and potassium) after exercise of more than 60 minutes. However, sports drinks do contain around 150 calories for 12 ounces. For the average exerciser, the electrolytes lost during exercise are easily replenished through eating a healthful diet. Unless your exercise is long and intense, water is a great calorie-free way to quench your thirst.

Here are some examples of the calorie content of various 12 ounce servings of fluids:

Beverage [12 oz]*	Calories*
Fruit punch	192
Whole milk	150
Lemonade	168
Fat-free milk	90
Kool Aid	174
Orange juice	168
Tonic water	124
Grape juice	225
Sports drink	99
Coffee	0
Cola	136
Tea	0
Fruit smoothie	225

References:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Nutrition for Everyone: /Rethink Your Drink. Accessed April, 2007. Available at/ http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/nutrition/pdf/rethink_your_drink.pdf. <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/nutrition/pdf/rethink_your_drink.pdf>

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