

people who don't practice your healthful habits. Aim to eat in a healthy manner 80% of the time.

\* Finally, insist that your child's school provide healthful options. Luckily, public awareness about nutrition is increasing: the trend is shifting away from junk food.

**Don't make your child a member of the "clean-plate club"**

While showing empathy for starving children, children pay more attention to their own hunger signals. Allow children to stop eating when they're full; should your children become hungry later, cut up an apple or unwrap a cheese stick.

**Exercise**

The second major contributor to the increase in obesity is the decrease in physical activity. Research shows that while formal exercise is helpful to overall health and weight-maintenance, lifestyle activity is the most important protection against overweight/obesity. The human body is not designed to be sedentary. We are literally outsmarting ourselves by using our creative brains to design machines to do our physical work. The result of this is that we have created an environment that makes it very difficult to expend enough energy to balance out our food intake.

**What do we do? Make our own bread again? Ride a horse to work?**

Well, those things would help, but may be a bit unrealistic.

Research has shown that without a doubt that there is a direct link between the number of hours spent in front of the TV or computer and overweight in children. In other words, the more sedentary, the fatter. What does this mean? Simply by turning off the TV/computer/video games, you significantly decrease the likelihood that your child will be overweight.

Set a TV "allowance" for your child. No more than one hour per day.

"Play" together. Ride bikes, go for walks, play kickball etc.

Encourage your children to try a variety of activities (sports, games, dance). Children who participate in such activities have higher self-esteem and are at lower risk for self-destructive behaviour.

**Other considerations**

Unless your child brings it up, don't discuss her weight. Concentrate on creating a healthy environment for the whole family.

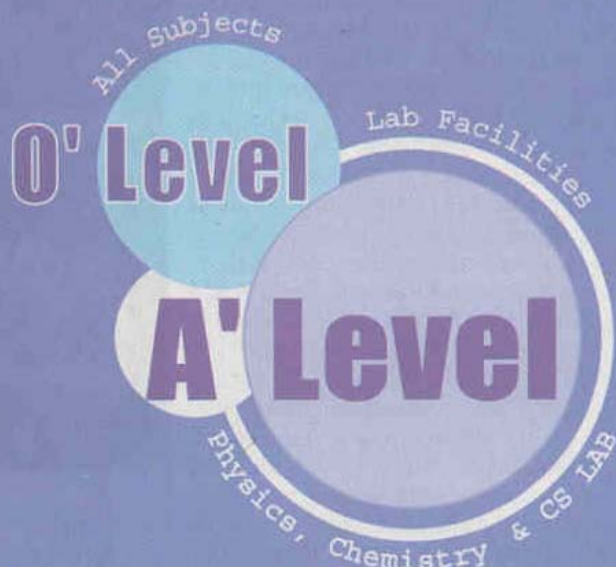
Don't allow teasing of the overweight child. ■

[www.foodnetwork.com](http://www.foodnetwork.com)

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