

Working With Children and Families to Address Overweight and Obesity: A Provider Coaching Guide



Talking about weight can be challenging because of the stigma or negative attitudes toward people who have overweight or obesity. As a provider, you can address the many causes of obesity and overweight by counseling families in your practice on diet and exercise, as well as food insecurity and other social issues.

This coaching guide offers ways to discuss weight with families in your practice, and provides strategies to overcome barriers to change. You can modify these talking points to address your patients, their parents or guardians, or the whole family. Remember, always use neutral or positive and nonjudgmental language.

Tips for Discussing Pediatric Overweight Obesity:

- 1. Talk Clearly and Sensitively With Families**
- 2. Acknowledge Physical and Societal Barriers**
- 3. Explain to Families the Importance of Working Together to Develop Healthy Habits**
- 4. Give Recommendations for Weight Management**
- 5. Set Goals**

Talk Clearly and Sensitively With Families

Talking about weight can be difficult. However, parents and guardians may not recognize that their child is overweight. It is important to understand each family's situation and to educate them on healthy weight ranges in a clear and empathetic way.

- **Provide clear and accurate evidence.**

"We checked your child's body mass index (BMI), which tells us if they are in a healthy weight range. Right now your child's BMI is not in a healthy range, and I'm concerned that this may cause health problems later in life, such as diabetes. Let's work together to find ways to address this. I can also share resources that might help."

- **Invite parents or guardians to share their views, perceptions and beliefs.**

"What concerns, if any, do you have about your teen's weight?"

- **Show concern and empathy rather than professional detachment.**

"That sounds difficult. Let's talk about how we can deal with that."

- **Offer support.**

"How can I help you (and your family) make healthier choices?"

Acknowledge Physical and Societal Barriers

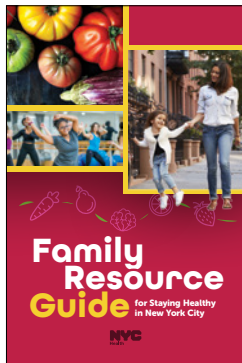
In today's world of fast food and busy schedules, it's not always easy for families to find a healthy balance. Parents and guardians may struggle with modeling healthy behaviors for their children and teens because nutritious food can be expensive or hard to find. Use the **Family Resource Guide for Staying Healthy in New York City** to help families access community resources.

- **Acknowledge the environmental nature of the problem.**

"It's hard to maintain a healthy weight these days when unhealthy food options and advertisements are in our neighborhoods. It can also be difficult to find healthy foods. Let's look together to see if there are any stores, farmers markets or community gardens in your area that carry healthy, affordable foods."

- **Separate the problem from the child or teen. Ask families about their mealtime and grocery shopping routines, where they shop or eat in their neighborhoods, if they cook at home and what challenges they face in feeding their families (e.g., food preferences, not enough time to cook or shop, and limited resources to purchase nutritious foods).**

"Tell me about mealtime in your home. Who does the grocery shopping, and who cooks? Do you eat out or at home more often? What challenges do you face when feeding your family?"



Explain to Families the Importance of Working Together to Develop Healthy Habits

- **Encourage an open dialogue.**

"Healthy habits begin early in life. Work together with your family to make healthy choices. If you have healthy habits, they will too."

- **Discourage parents, guardians and children from blaming themselves.**

"Making unhealthy choices can sometimes be the easier path. Let's talk about small steps you can take to create healthy habits. What is one thing you can change before our next appointment?"

- **Encourage parents and guardians to make mealtime family time.**

"Make mealtime family time whenever possible. Shop, cook and eat healthy foods with your children. Getting your children and teens involved will help them make healthy choices now and in the future."

**You Have the Power
to Improve Your
Family's Health
and Well-Being:**

**A Coaching Guide
For Parents**



Give Recommendations for Weight Management

Provide specific suggestions to help address behavior change. Think of it as a prescription for health. Use the plate planners, **You Have the Power to Improve Your Family's Health** palm card and **How Much Sugar Is in Your Drink?** flip chart as you talk with your patients about goal setting.



Rx for Healthy Eating

- Explain portion sizes.

"Let's look at this place mat, which shows the correct portion size, or amount of food, for proteins, grains and vegetables."

"What did you eat for dinner last night? Let's use this plate planner to see where we can make healthy changes."

"It's important to pay attention to portion size when eating out. Try sharing an adult entrée with your child rather than ordering them a kid's meal."



- Work with families on shopping, cooking and eating together.

"When you're cooking healthy meals as a family, talk about the ingredients and how you prepare them."

"Make your favorite family recipes with healthy substitutions. Use brown rice instead of white rice, add more vegetables to a stew or use chicken, fish or another lean protein instead of red meat."

"Try not to keep unhealthy foods in the house. Instead, ask your child what their favorite fruit is and keep that as a snack instead of chips or candy."

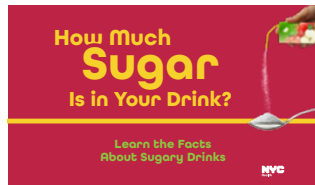
"When eating out, choose items that are grilled or baked rather than fried or breaded. Consider swapping fries for fruits or vegetables, like apple slices or carrot sticks."

- **Remind families to avoid sugary drinks.**

"Many drinks, like sweetened teas, sports drinks and juice drinks, are full of sugar and calories. Choose water or seltzer at home, school or restaurants instead of these drinks. Nothing quenches thirst better than NYC tap water, and it's free."

"Let's review this flipchart to learn about the different types of sugary drinks."

"Try drinking seltzer or adding fresh fruit to water for flavor."



Rx for Physical Activity

- **Encourage families to be more active. Physical activity is great for the body and mind.**

"There are many ways to exercise: Dance, walk to school or take the stairs instead of the elevator."

"Involve kids in family chores like vacuuming, sweeping and making beds."

"Let's go online and look for free recreational activities. For example, the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation has [activities for everyone](#)."

Rx for Sleep

- **Young people who don't get enough sleep have a higher risk of becoming overweight and obese. Teach parents or guardians that getting enough sleep — 10 to 11 hours a night — is key for their child's health and development.**

"Sleep is critical for healthy growth and development. Keep your child on a regular sleep schedule and try to stick with it."

"Is there a way to keep your child's phone or gaming system out of their room? Try moving the gaming system to the living room and using an alarm clock to help them get up for school."

Rx for Screen Time

- **Too much screen time is unhealthy for both parents and children. Talk with your patients and their families about cutting down on their media use.**

"Children often copy the behavior of adults around them. Pay attention to your own media use, especially around your family. Instead of watching TV or using your phone or computer, do something active instead — like taking a walk after dinner."

"Try to keep mealtimes screen-free. This is the perfect time for everyone to learn about each other's day or make plans to do fun family activities over the weekend."

Set Goals

Children and families need to work together to create healthy habits. Collaborate with families at your practice to set realistic and achievable goals. Set one goal at a time so they don't get discouraged quickly. Summarize and review each goal with the patient and their family. Reassess goals at follow-up visits.

- **Collaborate:**

"Think about everything we discussed today. What might be a good first step for you?"

"What can you do in the next week or even today to get started?"

"What ideas do you have for making this happen?"

- **Review:**

"Let's go over the goals we set today."

"What do you think might get in the way of achieving this goal?"

"Let's talk about how we could deal with that."

- **Reassess:**







"How did it go working on your goal?"

"That's great that you achieved your goal. Is there another one we could work on?"

Prescription for Healthy Eating and Active Living

Patient Name _____ Date _____


Use the corresponding pages of the Guide to Healthy Eating and Active Living in NYC.*

-  Eat fruits and vegetables every day (page 4)
-  Eat smaller portions (pages 5-7)
-  Drink water instead of sugary drinks (page 8)
-  Replace junk food with healthier snacks (page 9)
-  Cook nutritious meals (page 13)
-  Move more (page 16)

How will you do this? _____

Date of Next Visit _____

Health Care Provider Signature _____

*To download this guide, visit nyc.gov and search **Eating Healthy**. 



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