

Top 10 Tips to Fight Obesity in Teens/Children

Janet Carter, a Sodexo registered dietitian with MUSC, picks her top 10 tips for families

1. Clean up your own habits.

“You can’t expect your children to be healthier than you are.”

2. Out of sight, out of mind – or at least harder to get.

Get the junk food out of the house. Don’t buy it. Throw it out if it makes it into the home. On the other hand, make sure you have plenty of fruits and vegetables in the house whether it be fresh or frozen or a combination. They make for quick and easy snacks.

3. Get active as a family.

Make family time tied into that. It’s a good way to bond as a family. It helps children establish an activity pattern. Put it on the calendar.

4. Cook more

It’s easy to get into the habit of having fast food meals. Cooking at home is quicker and it’s certainly healthier. If you plan ahead properly and cook on your days off, then you can have meals easy to reheat on those busy week nights.

5. Get buy in from your child.

Have a discussion without judgment that allows them to figure out what kind of contract/reward system will work for them. Make it an open discussion and make sure it’s an open dialogue. Watch this video for tips on how to have this kind of

conversation. Visit these sites to download a sample contract and/or goal-setting sheet.

6. Start with baby steps.

It can be very small, achievable steps that can make a huge difference. Slow and steady wins the race.

7. Timing is everything. Create a sense of urgency.

In MUSC’s children’s Heart Health program, Carter and colleagues see children every two weeks where they check on goals. Having a specific TIME FOCUSED goal is important to success. Don’t focus on weight as much as the behaviors.

8. Expect imperfection.

Adopt a 90/10 rule where the goal is to do well 90 percent of the time. “You can goof up 10 percent.”

9. Keep revising the goals.

When healthy lifestyle behaviors have become habits, set a new mark. When possible make the goals fun, such as enrolling in a healthy cooking class. If you fail, revisit the goal and see if it’s realistic.

10. Instant gratification is the key to supporting healthy habits.

If you’re doing a contract, be sure to specify the reward. Get creative in rewarding yourself for taking small steps to success. Celebrate small victories.

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Form provided by Janet Carter, Sodexo registered dietitian with MUSC Boeing Center for Children's Wellness Heart Health Program, <http://www.musckids.com/heart/health/index.htm>
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