

Young Families

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A family-focused newsletter with young children in mind

Weight Concerns in Children? Check Your Child's Body Mass Index

A child's weight can be confusing. When does the healthy plumpness of childhood cross over to overweight? What if my child is thin, but seems to be growing well? Health professionals use growth charts based on a child's age and gender to help answer those childhood weight questions. Now caregivers can find answers, too.

Parents of kids age two and up can now check a handy Web site every six months to help determine if their children's weight gains or losses are heading in the right direction. Scientists at the ARS Children's Nutrition Research Center at Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, Texas, developed the easy-to-use, online resource and based it on growth

charts issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In just a few minutes spent at their computer, parents can easily calculate their child's BMI, or Body Mass Index, and put it into perspective by viewing the youngster's BMI percentile on a helpful graph. They simply enter the child's age, height, gender, and weight at: www.kidsnutrition.org/bodycomp/bmiz2.html

The BMI result, or score, is displayed along with a full-color graph that shows the child's current BMI percentile, as well as helpful examples of how to interpret these results. With regular use, the graph allows parents to immediately spot a drift toward an unhealthy pattern of weight gain or loss. The site

provides links to information on how to help kids manage their weight and a free download of the Java software necessary to use the site. If you have concerns about your child's weight, talk to your healthcare professional for specific advice.

Source: Agricultural Research Service, USDA. April, 2004.

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The Grace of Losing

One of the most important benefits of playing cards or board games with a kind and supportive parent is learning to be a graceful loser. The same lesson can be learned in competitive sports. To keep trying and do your best when losing is a more important lesson to learn than basking in the warm glow of winning.

A wise parent or coach will encourage children to keep their heads up and to continue to improve and work hard despite a disappointing score. What is important is the heart the child brings to the game. In this sense, losing is a different kind of victory, one that teaches a child a very important life lesson. Visit the WonderWise Parent at <http://www.ksu.edu/wwwparent/>

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Self-Respect Has Long-Term Impact on Children

Which do you think is more important self-esteem or self-respect? Professionals now recommend that a personal quality like self-respect has a more enduring impact on a child's life than feeling good about oneself.

To learn more about nurturing self-respect in children, take a free, non-credit course at the *WonderWise Parent* called "I'm Positive: Growing Up with Self-Respect." In the course, Chuck Smith defines self-respect as "the value of what we believe to be true for ourselves." The course is organized into four themes: I am a Person, I am a Dreamer, I am a Champion, I am a Friend. The online resource uses what Smith calls a "conversational" format that introduces readers to the material in a friendly, readable manner. To take the course, visit the WonderWise Parent at www.ksu.edu/wwwparent/ and look under "courses."

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Children and Grandparents Can Share Fun, Favorite Foods

Children can have a lot of fun spending time with their grandparents. There are several activities and games that children and grandparents can do together. One activity that may be fun, as well as enlightening for both child and grandparent, is cooking their favorite food together. The child and grandparent can each prepare one favorite food. Using safety precautions, grandparents can allow children to do as much as they feel comfortable doing. Once the food items are prepared, the child and grandparent can discuss similarities or differences and likes or dislikes between their favorite

food. Another variation is for the grandparent to prepare the food he or she enjoyed at the grandchild's age.

If the child or grandparent does not have a favorite food, visit K-State Research and Extension Kids a Cookin' home page for delicious, fun, and easy recipes at www.kidsacookin.ksu.edu.

Regardless of where the recipes come from and what items are prepared, always practice food-safety techniques such as:

- Wash hands in hot soapy water before preparing food.

- Wash cutting boards, knives, utensils, and countertops in hot soapy water before and after preparing each food item.

- Use plastic or other non-porous cutting boards. Cutting boards should be run through the dishwasher – or washed in hot soapy water – after use.

- Consider using paper towels to clean up kitchen surfaces. Or, if using cloth towels, wash them often in hot water in the washing machine.

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Grandparents Wise to Focus on Mealtime Safety

Eating together creates special family memories for grandparents and grandchildren. Before young children share a meal with grandma or grandpa, it's a good idea to review some of the basics of choking prevention. The special day and added excitement of a visit may increase a child's likelihood to choke at meal or snack time.

It's not easy to know how capable a young child is at chewing and swallowing, so consider carefully what foods are offered. Because of an immature swallowing mechanism, children are especially prone to choking. Some foods should be avoided for children under the age of 4. These include nuts, raw carrot or apple (unless they are finely shredded), marshmallows, popcorn, hard or sticky candies, chunks of meat (including hot dogs), thick pieces or spreads of cheese or peanut butter, whole grapes, and gum balls. Large pieces or stiff, dry

foods may cause choking on foods we might otherwise consider safe, such as crusty breads and some cereals.

Other mealtime tactics help guard against choking. Common courtesy habits of "take turns talking" and "let's not talk with food in our mouth" can help a child focus on chewing and swallowing.

Encouraging children to eat while seated and never while walking, running, or playing is not only safer but less messy.

Although grandparents and relatives successfully raised their own children, it can be a challenge to know just what a young visitor is capable of safely eating. Paying close attention to a child's capabilities makes family mealtime safe and enjoyable for everyone.

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Additional Thoughts

The best grandparenting activities flow naturally from the interests of both the grandparents and the grandchildren. You can create a deep, loving relationship with your grandchildren by sharing the things you love with them, and by being available to hear about the ideas and activities that excite them. Some ideas for activities and ways to spend time with your grandchildren can be found at: www.helpguide.org/aging/grandparenting.htm#activities

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