

HEALTH

Young students: My body and brain are working well!
Older students/teens/adults: Wellbeing in body, mind and spirit.

Dear Dr. Robyn,

I wanted to talk to you about a bit of a touchy topic. Our children are getting a little older and they are starting to put on more weight. I know from reading your book that this can be a “hot button” for many kids. How can I make sure they are staying healthy?

-- Sara B, Phoenix, AZ

Dear Sara,

Yes, you are right. “Weight” can be a hot button for many children as they get older. For one thing, while it’s normal and natural for children to put on weight as they go through puberty, their bodies change greatly and some can become uncomfortable. In addition, as children become adolescents, they may become more aware of media messages that glorify “body perfection” and can become more prone to comparing themselves to others.

In my book, *Good Girls Don't Get Fat: How Weight Obsession is Messing Up Our Girls & How We Can Help Them Thrive Despite It*, I talk about the importance of health over weight. There are actions that everyone can take, regardless of weight, that help to keep us healthy.

(1) Eat foods that nourish the body: Everyone needs to eat a balanced diet that provides such things as lean proteins, fruits,

vegetables, whole grains, and low fat dairy items. We can explain to our children that they should eat a variety of natural foods that represent every color in the rainbow. When we eat nutritious foods, we feel energized.

(2) Move your body: Children and teens should be getting at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day. This activity should be fun and rewarding! It also should be performed at moderate to vigorous intensity to get the heart pumping and the muscles engaged.

(3) Get enough sleep: For many, this is a tall order! Some will claim that homework, stress, extracurriculars, or a social life is keeping them from getting a full night’s rest. Still, sleep is vital for a healthy body. Children typically need 10-12 hours of sleep per day and teens typically need 8-9 hours per day. A good night’s sleep means greater health and better performance in school!

(4) Manage stress: Children and

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teens need to learn how to manage their stress in positive ways. While some will turn to risky behavior like drug use or extreme dieting, there are many ways that our children can reduce stress to keep themselves healthy. Suggest and model different methods of stress reduction for your child such as talking to an adult or trusted friend, to playing sports or music, to simply taking some time for himself.

Here's to your success!

