



**Arkansas  
Children's  
Hospital**

# Understanding Metabolism

Metabolism is the amount of energy you expend during your day—the number of calories your body uses to fuel the functions that keep you alive. Increasing metabolism will help your child lose weight, decreasing metabolism will keep your child from losing weight or may make them gain more.

## Things that can increase metabolism:

- Eat small healthy meals, more often
- Watch portion sizes closely—(see portion sizes handout)
- Increase fiber intake
- Aerobic activity most days of the week (30-60 minutes, moderate intensity)
- Lift weights for upper and lower body strength at least twice a week
- Cut your calories slowly over time
- Keep proteins to 10-15 % of total calories per day and look for low fat sources like fish, chicken, and beans
- Switch to whole grains and eat very few refined carbohydrates and sweets/sugar

## Things that can decrease your metabolism:

- Skipping meals or eating a few large meals and skipping snacks
- Drastic drop in calorie intake
- Low fiber intake
- Having a lot of high fat protein in the diet
- Taking large portions or “super-sizing” (see portion sizes handout)
- Leading a sedentary lifestyle
- Eating a lot of refined fiber and sweets/sugar

## Signs that metabolism may be too low:

- Depression
- Decreased alertness
- Constipation
- Fatigue
- Brittle nails
- Dry or thinning hair
- Increased cholesterol
- Dry skin or skin with dough-like consistency
- Low tolerance for cold temperatures

Always check with your medical physician before changing your activity level or nutritional intake. Consultation with a nutritionist can also be very helpful.

*For more information regarding these handouts contact:*

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*For treatment in a multidisciplinary medical clinic for overweight youth:*

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