

# health, not weight!



## How Do I Know If I have...

### Unrealistic and Unhealthy Goals about My Body and Weight?

- You obsess about counting calories and fat grams in the food you eat in order to control your weight and body fat.
- You restrict the amount of food you eat by skipping meals, dieting or fasting.
- You feel compelled to exercise, and feel guilty or anxious if you don't work out every day, even when you are tired or sick.
- You avoid participating in sports and other activities like swimming, dancing, and going out to parties and dinner with friends and family because you feel self-conscious about the way your body looks.

## Why is Health, Not Weight, Important?

**The key strategies to feeling and looking your best and having a positive outlook in life are to eat well, keep active, and maintain a healthy body weight for you.** It's not easy to eat well consistently or to keep fit, with a busy schedule and fast food so easily available. Keeping fit doesn't have to mean a special trip to the gym or an aerobics class. It can be walking or bicycling to school or work, or taking the stairs instead of the elevator - making it all just a regular part of your routine. For kids, exercise can mean playing tag in the park, using the monkey bars, joining a neighbourhood sports game, or riding bikes with friends and family.

We get into trouble when we have negative and unrealistic thoughts about food and the way our bodies should look, when 'going on a diet' becomes a routine part of our lives, and when exercise is no longer for fun and is just a way to burn calories. This kind of thinking can lead to serious consequences within a broad range of health issues.

Everyone can benefit from regular, moderate exercise and life-long healthy eating habits. This includes having a positive attitude about eating and food, knowing how to read your body's signals in order to eat when hungry, and stopping when you are full and content. Take care of what your body needs by planning your meals and snacks ahead of time and preparing food at home. Know enough about food, nutrition and eating for energy to make healthy choices when dining out socially.

When consistent healthy eating habits are combined with regular physical activity, the health benefits go far beyond having a leaner body. They include stronger muscles and bones, a decrease in the risk of developing type 2 diabetes, lower blood pressure and blood cholesterol levels, and an easier outlook on life. You will sleep better, have less stress and anxiety, be able to concentrate more, and just feel generally better about handling all of life's challenges.

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## What Can I Do?



### Where do I go from here?

**Jessie's Legacy, a program of Family Services of the North Shore provides web based eating disorders prevention resources to support BC youth, families, educators and professionals.**

Family Services of the North Shore is one of the 7 BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information.

Visit [www.jessieslegacy.com](http://www.jessieslegacy.com) or [www.heretohelp.bc.ca](http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca)

- 1) Don't deny your body valuable nutrients by dieting, skipping meals or using weight loss products.
- 2) Stop searching for the perfect diet. 95% of diets fail because they just don't work for us! The diet industry won't decrease your size, just your self-esteem. And they make billions of dollars doing it!
- 3) Avoid categorizing foods as "forbidden" or "off-limits." Eating should not be associated with guilt or shame.
- 4) Instead of seeing certain foods as "good" or bad;" try thinking of them in terms of "a good thing to eat often," or "a good thing to eat occasionally."
- 5) Your body knows what it needs in order to keep running efficiently and be at its best. Learn to listen and respond to what it needs when you are hungry. When you don't listen to hunger signs, your body will find ways to remind you, like a headache or a growling stomach!
- 6) Eat in moderation and know when your body begins to feel full and content. For some people, this might mean eating 5 or 6 smaller, well-balanced meals or snacks throughout the day instead of 3 large meals. You should feel satisfied after each meal, not overstuffed or still hungry.
- 7) Eat because you are actually hungry, not because you are bored, stressed or feeling lonely.
- 8) Practice mindful eating. Try to sit down when eating snacks and meals. Chew your food slowly; enjoy the tastes, smells and textures of the food.
- 9) Eat together as a family! Research has shown the many social, academic and health benefits of eating together as a family.
- 10) Be active, have fun, participate in physical activities that you can enjoy, *whatever* your body shape or size!

♥ **Counselling**

♥ **Support**

♥ **Education**

Family Services of the North Shore is an accredited not-for-profit community-based agency that offers education, support and counselling services. We also lead the provincial work in eating disorders prevention. Family Services of the North Shore has been caring for the community for over 60 years. Our high-profile, proactive presence throughout the province connects the community through a variety of programs that create an environment for all families and individuals to thrive.



We recognize the continuing contribution of the City of North Vancouver, District of North Vancouver, District of West Vancouver, and the financial assistance of the Province of British Columbia.

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