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Mr. Leidig is an Instructor in Pediatrics at Tufts University School of Medicine and teaches at Northeastern University. With expertise in the design, management and evaluation of clinical programs and research studies related to weight management, he counsels youth and families to embrace healthful eating and physical activity habits.

Center for Youth Wellness

Floating Hospital for Children's Center for Youth Wellness, an excellent resource for youth and parents, is located at 755 Washington Street between Chinatown and the Theatre District in Boston. Individual and family counseling for children aged 2 to 10 and a 10-week after school teen weight loss group for 11- to 18- year-olds are available. Visit www.floatinghospital.org/cyw to learn more or call 617-636-3381.

**Floating Hospital
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Health Sheet

HEALTHY EATING Q&A

with Michael Leidig, RD, LDN, CPT Clinical Director, Center for Youth Wellness

“Diet” isn’t a word you typically want to associate with a child; however, its true meaning is “way of life” and that is what the Center for Youth Wellness teaches youth and families. Improving eating habits is not about restrictive diets that deprive. Instead, it involves finding and embracing a long-term, enjoyable, culturally appropriate and well-balanced eating plan that is implemented as a way of life.

Michael Leidig, RD, LDN, CPT, Clinical Director of the Center for Youth Wellness at Floating Hospital for Children at Tufts Medical Center, provides sound information parents can use to improve the eating habits of family members.

What is happening with American diets? What is healthy?

The most healthful diets include culturally appropriate and enjoyable foods in well-balanced portions. American eating has become unbalanced. Carbohydrate consumption has increased. Fat intake has decreased. Restaurant portions have ballooned. Americans are eating out more and cooking family meals less. The options for highly refined carbohydrates — like sugary drinks, chips, crackers, cookies, candies, and pastries — are abundant. The combination of these factors has significantly contributed to expanding waist lines and the decline of balanced eating.

What’s balanced eating?

Eating balanced requires an understanding of nutrition fundamentals regarding proteins, fats and carbohydrates. Protein comes from any food that walked, swam or flew before it got to you — poultry, seafood, meats, eggs and dairy products — as well as plant-based foods like soy and beans. Animal proteins are also a source of fats, as well as vegetable oils, nuts, nut butters, dressings and spreads. Carbohydrates are found in vegetables, fruits, dairy and grains/starches like wheat, corn and potato.

Balanced eating involves choosing the healthiest proteins, fats and carbohydrates. The healthiest proteins are “lean” ones with less saturated fat like skinless poultry, seafood, lean red meats, low-fat dairy, beans and soy. The healthiest fats are those found in vegetable oils, trans-fat free spreads, light dressings, unsalted nuts and fatty fish like salmon. Healthy carbohydrates are less processed meaning they contain more fiber, less added sugar and no trans-fats. Options include vegetables, fruits and whole grains like brown rice, barley, quinoa and 100% whole grain breads, crackers and cereals.

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RESOURCES

Recommended web sites for more information: <http://www.eatright.org/kids>

<http://www.letsmove.gov/eathealthy.php>

LOCATED IN THE HEART OF BOSTON, Tufts Medical Center is the principal teaching hospital of Tufts University School of Medicine and is home to the full-service pediatric hospital, Floating Hospital for Children. For directions, visit www.floatinghospital.org/AboutUs/Directions.


Floating Hospital
for Children

at **Tufts** Medical Center

How do we eat balanced?

The following table illustrates how to eat balanced throughout the day. Combining foods from the left and right sides of the table create balanced meals and snacks.

		VEGGIES/FRUITS/WHOLE GRAINS	PROTEINS/DAIRY/FATS
BALANCED MEALS & SNACKS	BREAKFAST	100% Whole Wheat Bread & Apple	1 Egg & 1 Slice 2% Cheese
	LUNCH	Salad with 100% Whole Wheat Pita	3 ounces Grilled Chicken & 2 Tbsp Light Dressing
	SNACK	1 cup Blueberries or 6-8 Whole Grain Crackers or 1 cup Celery Sticks	1 cup Plain Greek or Light Flavored Yogurt or 1 ounce 2% Cheese or 1 Tbsp Peanut Butter
	DINNER	2 cups Steamed Broccoli & 1 cup Cooked Brown Rice	3 ounces Salmon & 1 Tbsp Olive Oil (for cooking and flavoring)



“There’s no way my child will eat veggies, fruits, and whole grains!”

The best way to encourage more healthful eating is to model the behavior. In addition to telling your family — lead the way by showing them how to do it. Set you and your family up for success. First, stock the refrigerator and pantry with healthful foods and make them easily accessible. For instance keep fresh fruit out on the kitchen counter and string cheese in the refrigerator for grab-and-go snacking. Second, encourage greater interest in vegetables, fruits and whole grains by preparing food in flavorful ways. For children and adolescents, multiple choices are essential. Would your child (or you for that matter) eat a bowl of plain steamed broccoli? Instead, what if you offered the choice between broccoli sautéed in olive oil or carrots with a light ranch dressing? The latter is not only more appealing, but it provides a say and a choice in the preparation too. Remember to change gradually, not abruptly. Whole grains can be incrementally substituted for refined ones; for example, serve brown rice and white rice together initially before transitioning entirely to brown rice. When you model the behavior, make foods readily available and find ways to make it flavorful in healthful ways, you are instilling balanced eating habits in your home.

Other Tips:

Reducing consumption of sugar sweetened beverages is one of the easiest ways to improve the healthfulness of your diet. While most know it’s a good idea to reduce soda, many don’t realize that 100 percent juice has more calories and sugar than soda. Instead of drinking soda or juice, try water, low-fat plain milk or soymilk. That’s a great first step.

Providing healthful, balanced meals requires good choices and some preparation — and does not require you shop only at high end markets or pay premium prices. Choose seasonal vegetables and fruits to save money. If your family favorites are out of season, opt for frozen selections which are often on sale and come in a variety of blends. Purchase lean varieties of chicken, turkey and fish when grocery stores offer bulk sales —so stock up and freeze up. If you are struggling to provide your family enough food, let your health care provider know. A social worker can help find a food assistance program that fits your needs.

Remember, improving your health and your diet isn’t a short-term goal. Instead, it’s a lifelong journey and you will have more success if food is enjoyed and consumed in balanced portions by all members of the family. □