Bad eating habits in children can result from any number of things, but the end result is that a child could become overweight or even obese due to poor eating habits. A child’s bad eating habits could be formed at home, at friend or family’s homes, or at school. When children have the option to choose the foods they eat for themselves, they will often choose the sugary, sweet or savory options over the healthy choice. The key to changing a child’s bad eating habits it to set a good example of healthy eating habits and also teach the child why healthy eating is important.

Many children today are overfed and yet, at the same time, undernourished. This happens when parents or schools make the decision that a quick meal or a fun meal is easier than a healthy, well-balanced meal. Parents often give in to children who want to eat fried foods, candy, chips, soda and any other number of unhealthy foods instead of whole grains, fruits, vegetables and lean meats. These poor eating habits in children can lead to high blood pressure, obesity, diabetes and asthma. To avoid these health concerns, it is very important to change a child’s bad eating habits.

Teach your child healthy eating habits starting when they first learn to eat. Give you children plenty of fruits and vegetables so that they acquire a taste for healthy food instead of sugary foods. What you give a child will directly affect the taste preferences they have later on in life. Children cannot distinguish healthy foods from unhealthy foods on their own, especially in their early year, so it is up to the parent to make the healthy food choices for the child.

As children reach toddler and school age, they begin to mimic the environment around them. This includes food choices made by adults and other children. If the parent is eating unhealthy food and consistently stopping for fast food instead of cooking nutrient rich meals at home, the child will think that this behavior is ok and want to replicate the behavior. If a parent eats everything on their plate except for the vegetables and throws the vegetables away at the end of the meal, the child will want to do the same. Setting an example of good eating habits is one of the best ways to ensure that a child will also adopt good eating habits. When children reach teenage years and beyond, they will be able to make their own food choices, and hopefully the lessons that parents have taught during the formative years carry on throughout adolescence and adulthood.

Another way to change a child’s bad eating habits is to make sure that exercise is a part of the child’s daily routine. When the body is active, it burns calories and requires energy and nourishment. Teach children that the correct nourishment to keep up energy levels and stamina is found in healthy foods like fruits, whole grains, water and vegetables. While sugar will give an immediate surge of energy, foods that have a high level of sugar will only cause children to crash shortly after eating and feel a sense of lethargy that natural, healthy foods do not.

The key to developing healthy eating habits in children is to start teaching them from an early age what food choices are good for them, and providing an example as to what healthy eating is. If a child is already overweight, then a diet may need to be developed to limit caloric intake and replace unhealthy food choices with healthy food choices. It’s also important not to blame
the child for any overeating or poor eating choices, as children are mostly limited by what their parents feed them.