HELPING YOUR CHILD GAIN WEIGHT HEALTHFULLY

BMI is used as a screening tool to assess for potential concerns with a child's weight. BMI is calculated based upon a child's weight and height and expressed as a percentage compared to other children of the same age and sex. If a child has a BMI-for-age below the 5th percentile on the growth chart, concern is raised that the child may be underweight.

Childhood is the time when children develop eating and exercise habits that will follow them into their teenage and adult years. Even if your child needs to gain weight, the goal is to do this in a healthy manner focused on the addition of nutritious foods to the daily diet.

Healthy Lifestyle Habits:

- Encourage your child to eat 3 meals and 2 snacks daily. Children have smaller stomachs than adults and cannot eat as much food at one time. Including nutritious snacks during the day can assist children with meeting all of their nutrient needs.
  - Consider snacks to be “mini-meals” and try to offer foods from at least 2 food groups with each snack; for example: peanut butter toast, bean dip and baked tortilla chips, yogurt with fruit and granola, string cheese and whole grain crackers, and trail mix made with nuts, dried fruit, cereal, pretzels, and dark chocolate chips.
  - Make a power-packed smoothie by blending together yogurt, half a banana, frozen fruit, and juice or milk. Changing the types of fruit used will change the flavor of the smoothie – for a fun flavor twist and added nutrients try blending in peanut butter.

- Generously top bread, muffins, tortillas, and bagels with healthy spreads that are packed with nutrients, such as peanut butter, almond butter, avocado, and hummus.

- Add nuts, seeds, dried fruit, and granola to oatmeal and other cereals. Make sure to prepare oatmeal using milk instead of water for added nutrients.

- Top vegetables, tacos, salads, and chili with shredded cheese, sliced avocado, and olives.

- To increase the nutrient content of macaroni and cheese, mashed potatoes, casseroles, soups, oatmeal, fruit smoothies, and even peanut butter add 1-2 tablespoons of dried milk.

- If your child is a picky eater, gradually introduce new foods and encourage your child to try two bites each time. Be persistent, as it may take 10-15 tries for your child to accept a new food. In addition to the new food, include items at the meal you know your child will eat.

- For guidance on how much preschoolers should aim to eat from each food group during the day visit ChooseMyPlate.gov to see their sample daily food plans.

REFERENCES:
http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/childrens_bmi/about_childrens_bmi.html