Helping People with Intellectual Disabilities (ID)
Maintain a Healthy Weight

Many people struggle to maintain a healthy weight. However, people with ID often have more trouble than others. According to The Arc's HealthMeet assessments of over 1,250 individuals, people with ID were more likely to be extremely overweight.

BODY MASS INDEX	HEALTHMEET PARTICIPANTS	US ADULT POPULATION
Underweight (under 18.5)	3%	2%[1]
Healthy Weight (18.5-24.9)	23%	29%[2]
Overweight (25.0 – 29.9)	28%	34%
Obese (30.0-39.9)	34%	29%
Extremely Obese (40+)	12%	6%[3]

One reason for this is that people with ID do not tend to eat healthily. While 23 percent of US adults report eating 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day, only 11 percent of individuals with ID that were assessed reported the same.[4]

There are many things that you can do to help people with ID eat healthier:

GET PEOPLE INVOLVED

Ask people with ID what they want to eat and get them involved in making their meals. Consider buying cookbooks developed for people with disabilities that require limited reading.

SNACK ON FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Eating fresh fruits and vegetables for snacks offers tasty alternatives to sweet and fatty food. As a bonus, buying in-season fresh fruits and vegetables can save you money at the store.

MAKE MEALS EASIER

Purchase adapted utensils so that individuals who may have difficulty using or holding utensils can eat more easily. For those on a pureed diet, research recipes online to make tasty and nutritious meals. Check out NetWellness (http://www.netwellness.org) for entree and beverage recipes.

PLAN MEALS

Make a plan for each meal of the week that includes 3 of the 5 food groups. Visit http://www.choosemyplate.gov/ for more information.

CONTACT THE ARC

There are many other ways you can help people with ID maintain a healthy weight. Call us at 1-800-433-5255 if you need help or have questions or concerns.

1 Fryar, C.D. & Ogden, C.L. Prevalence of underweight among adults aged 20 and over: United States, 1960-1962 through 2011-2012. (2014). Retrieved from: https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hestat/underweight_adult_11_12/underweight_adult_11_12.htm.

2 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2014a). Healthy weight, overweight, and obesity among adults aged 20 and over, by selected characteristics: United States, selected years 1960-1962 through 2009-2012. *Health, United States*, 2013. Retrieved from: http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hus/2013/069.pdf.

3 Fryar. C.D. & Ogden, C.L. Prevalence of overweight, obesity, and extreme obesity among adults: United States, 1960-1962 through 2011-2012. (2014). Retrieved from: http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hestat/obesity_adult_11_12/obesity_adult_11_12.htm.

4 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2014b). Fruits and Vegetables – 2009: Adults who have consumed fruits and vegetables five or more times per day. *Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System: Prevalence and Trends Data*. Retrieved from: https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/pdf/fruits_vegetables.pdf.

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The Arc HealthMeet