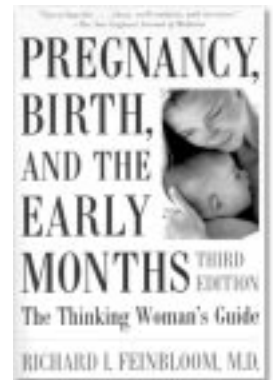


Pregnancy, Birth, and the Early Months: The Thinking Woman's Guide

by Richard I Feinbloom, MD

Review by Luz Garcia, PA



3rd ed. Cambridge (MA):
Perseus; 2000. 345 pages.
ISBN: 0-7382-0181-2.

The goal of *Pregnancy, Birth, and the Early Months: The Thinking Woman's Guide* is written to educate pregnant women, and I, as a woman, certainly did feel very well informed after reading this book.

Now in its third edition, the book is written clearly, concisely, and comprehensively. The author, an experienced physician, starts with an unusual, interesting discussion of the decision-making process and provides information that people can use throughout their lives when facing complex choices. The first piece of advice given is for women to become widely informed about all aspects of pregnancy and reproduction so that they can evaluate the pros and cons of any pregnancy-related choices to be made. The book takes an intellectual approach to its subject (appropriate for most—but perhaps not all—of the intended audience), and relevant supporting data are provided freely. The book will be of interest not only to mothers but also to fathers.

Pregnancy, Birth, and the Early Months is particularly well suited for women who want to know all they can about pregnancy. The book will be a wonderful resource for mothers who have at least a high school education and an interest in learning. A full range of topics is covered, ranging from prenatal visits and genetics to laboratory tests and the reasons for them. Probably of greatest interest to mothers will be the section that discusses common problems in pregnancy, how to choose a healthy diet, and how to care for a baby. Useful information is provided about special situations and complications so that if problems do occur, readers are equipped in advance with the knowledge provided by this book.

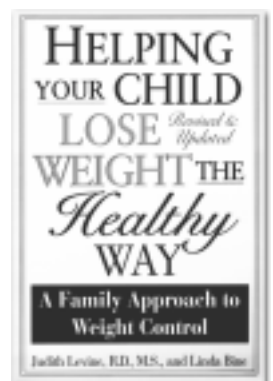
Pregnancy, Birth, and the Early Months is a helpful resource containing valuable information that most mothers will read, appreciate, and understand. The multiple editions of this book speak to its success in accomplishing its goal. ♦

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Helping Your Child Lose Weight the Healthy Way: A Family Approach to Weight Control

by Judith Levine, RD, MS, and Linda Bine

Review by Kathleen H Jones, MD



New York: Citadel Press;
2001. ISBN: 0-8065-2283-6. 302 pages, paper,
\$14.95.

We've all seen the headlines: Obesity and type II diabetes in children are now reaching epidemic proportions. Indeed, surveys by the National Center for Health Statistics indicate that about one in five children in the United States is now overweight.¹ But obesity in children is not just a frightening headline: Obesity is an important chronic disorder associated with many possible long-term complications as well as complex family, social, and psychological issues. Brave is the parent or clinician who dares to assume the task of attempting to rescue a child from the clutches of obe-

sity. Braver yet are the clinician and health writer who would create a guide for such parents.

Judith Levine (a registered dietician and consultant for the American Heart Association) and Linda Bine (a health and medical writer as well as senior editor for Kaiser Permanente in Northern California) have done just that by creating the revised and updated edition of *Helping Your Child Lose Weight the Healthy Way*.

The authors use a sensitive, well-organized, practical, family-oriented approach to outline a concise plan for helping a child lose weight. More important, they

do not address weight loss as the goal but rather describe ways to make slow, incremental changes in food choice and activity. Developing a healthy lifestyle is the goal: "Positive changes in food and fitness should be your goal—not changes on the bathroom scale."^{2:p69} This book is not about putting your child "on a diet."

The authors present a stepwise plan. First, assess the child: Does the child think he (or she) is overweight? Are you the only one who detects a problem? You should select an approach on the basis of answers to these questions.

Next they guide us gently through the process of gathering data. Growth charts for height and weight and calculation of body mass index (BMI) are presented clearly and simply, as are instructions in how to complete a food diary and eating behavior survey as well as how to assess your child's (and your family's) exercise attitudes and behaviors. Having acquired assessment tools, readers are presented with eight substantial chapters on basic principles of nutrition. Among the topics discussed are the food pyramid, how to understand nutrition labels, savvy grocery shopping and planning, how to eat healthfully away from home, and calorie-lowering strategies designed especially for kids. This section of the book serves as great reference material.

The third major section of the book, "Focus on Fitness," starts appropriately with a chapter titled "Off the Couch!": "The widespread use of two modern inventions—the television and the automobile—have contributed significantly to the decrease in physical activity among adults and children."^{2:p177} In terms of causing epidemic obesity, this decrease in activity is at least as important as overeating. As in the section on making healthy food choices, the "Off the Couch!" section emphasizes ways to make slow, incremental changes in family activity lifestyle. Emphasis is placed on the family being active together—not on the child joining organized sports or exercise regimens. All of the recommendations given in the book meticulously and

sensitively avoid singling out one child as needing to lose weight or be more active. This approach not only respects the self-esteem of the child but also recognizes that long-term success can be achieved only if the whole family is involved and if changes are gradual, small, and ongoing. The authors also recognize that children learn best by example.

The last section teaches parents how to facilitate change and how to recognize their own attitudes that might hinder change. The book also contains a section of "kid-friendly" recipes, followed by excellent bibliographic references. The book's recommendations closely follow recommendations of the Expert Committee on Pediatric Obesity convened by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration, US Department of Health and Human Services.³

As a parent and as a pediatrician who is truly frustrated by inadequate skills in treating obesity, I see this book as a ray of light in a dark room. The book uses an excellent stepwise approach that treats obesity simply and logically as a chronic problem and warns against short-term, quick weight loss. The book is helpful not only for parents but also for any clinician who provides medical care to overweight children. ❖

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