

Trim Kids: The proven 12-week plan that has helped thousands of children achieve a healthier weight.

Melinda Sothern, Ph.D., M. Ed., C.E.P.  
T. Kristian von Almen, Ph.D.  
Heidi Shumacher, R.D., L.D.N., C.D.E.  
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*Reviewed by: Debbie Petitpain, MS, RD, Program coordinator and Dietitian for Heart Health, Children's Hospital, and Melissa H. Henshaw, MD, Department of Pediatrics, Medical University of South Carolina*

Background information

It is well known that childhood and adolescent obesity is on the rise. As a result of this trend, many of our children will face a lifetime of poor health, low self-esteem, weight obsession, and possibly premature death. Americans are already spending vast sums of money on weight loss products and services to no avail. Will one more book make a difference? I think so.

Trim Kids is a no-nonsense, parents-take-charge, 12-week program that provides step-by-step instructions for transitioning to a healthier lifestyle. The team of authors includes an exercise physiologist, a registered dietitian, and a research psychologist. For over 15 years, this team has worked with the clinically-based ‘Committed to Kids’ pediatric weight management program. They have used their combined experiences and successes in ‘CTK’ as the basis for this home-based program.

Book Summary

In part one the authors describe the program and provide background information on three modifiable lifestyle components: nutrition, activity and behavior. There are also several sections on how to identify weight status, including questionnaires and a BMI chart. A strong emphasis is placed on the necessity of the pediatrician’s involvement.

Part two is the week-by-week guide. Each week addresses the lifestyle components, highlights comments from parents and kids, describes new strength and flexibility exercises and group activity ideas, provides a menu, shopping list and recipes, and provides behavior-based exercises for the parent and child to do together. The appendix includes weekly goal setting forms and diaries for tracking intake and activity.

Assessing the child's weight status is done with the pediatrician in week one. However, the authors stress that it is the *family's* responsibility to enlist the pediatrician's help. The initial assessment includes height, weight, BMI, and laboratory values. Depending on the child's current BMI, s/he is placed in one of four color-coded levels and "graduates" into other levels as weight loss progresses. Calorie requirements are determined in week two and are based on age and gender. The color-coded level determines the physical activity prescription and appropriate exercises (given weekly). Practical and attainable short term (12 weeks) and long term (one year) goals are set in the beginning and evaluated at the middle and end of the program. Small, weekly goals set the pace for program. After reevaluating the goals at the end of the program, the 12 weeks can be repeated as necessary to progress towards the long term goals.

Each week acknowledges different behavioral aspects of overweight, including evaluating the benefits and sacrifices of change, identifying trigger foods and barriers to increasing activity, and providing positive reinforcement. Nutrition topics cover healthy breakfasts and snacks, portion control, dining out, and label reading. There is also extensive information on the different food groups as well as weekly menus, recipes, shopping lists, and food diaries. Exercise is covered in two ways: through a weekly aerobic, flexibility and strength prescription based on color-level and with ideas for decreasing daily sedentary time and getting the whole family active. Weekly exercise diary forms are also provided, complete with pictures.

### Evaluation

The strength of this book lies in its integration of nutrition, activity and behavioral advice into a step-by-step approach to making changes one week at a time. The authors' plans for changing diet, activity and behavior are easily digestible and specific, while acknowledging the difficulties of change. The role of family and the need for a commitment to long-term lifestyle change are stressed throughout. The writing style and anecdotes deliver detailed information on a serious subject in a light-hearted, supportive manner. The readability may be too high for some of the parents in the audience, however, the same themes repeat throughout the text so the message is driven home.

This book is appropriate for families with children who need to lose weight *and* families who want to live a healthier lifestyle. It should be noted however, that this book is written for the caregiver who is already motivated but desires guidance and structure for initiating changes. This caregiver is the key to success for the family using Trim Kids. S/he will set new limits in the household, serve as a role model, monitor behavior and advocate change – a tall order for any parent. Trim Kids may also be used in the context of an RD-implemented, MD-supervised clinical setting, particularly for families with a need for a hands-on approach to weight management. In either setting, this book provides an informed, upbeat, and specific approach to living a healthier lifestyle.