

# USA WEEKEND

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**ThinkSmart:**  
Great gambling  
vacations

**CookSmart:**  
Quick pizzas  
for busy nights

**Snakes on  
a Plane's**  
Elsa Pataky

BACK-TO-SCHOOL SPECIAL REPORT

## Real Parents. Real Solutions.

The verdict is in—inspirational. Meet everyday Americans, like Judge Louis Schiff, who do extraordinary things for their children's education.





# Health Briefs

## SMART TIPS FOR BETTER LIVING

### CHILDHOOD DIETING: Mothers, take a chill pill

Note to moms: If you're preoccupied with dieting, weight and body size, you might be unwittingly passing on your obsession to your children, especially to your daughters, says an ongoing study of adolescents (5,331 girls and 3,881 boys) and their mothers.

"While childhood obesity is certainly a national problem," says epidemiologist Alison E. Field, assistant professor of pediatrics at Children's Hospital Boston, "an unhealthy concern with weight can lead to frequent dieting and low self-esteem in teens."

Overeating is not good for your health, but dieting is not an effective tool for long-term weight control. In fact, dieters gain more weight.

In girls, preoccupation with thinness can lead to unhealthy behaviors, such as vomiting and using laxatives.

Boys don't usually want to be thin, but they may focus on not being fat and having more defined muscles. These boys are at risk for dieting and for using steroids and creatine to bulk up.

### How parents can help

To promote a healthy weight without over-stressing the issue, try Field's tips:

- Play up exercise; be active together.
- Cut down on empty calories, especially sweetened beverages.
- Don't talk about feeling fat in front of your children.

- Limit portion sizes.
- Recognize that if dieting hasn't worked for you, it won't for your kids.
- If your child is overweight, ask your pediatrician about seeing a weight loss specialist trained to work with kids.
- Talk to your children about what a healthy body weight really looks like. Explain that pictures of skinny models may be manipulated.



- Discuss celebrity weight obsession and its connection to eating disorders, drug use and hospitalization.
- Know what a healthy weight is by using body mass index (BMI). Learn your child's BMI at [cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/bmi/index.htm](http://cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/bmi/index.htm). — Susan T. Lennon