

Family Wellness – Nutrition

Make healthy living and regular activity part of your family philosophy. Children and others learn from example. If you are regularly active and eat well, your children will be more likely to do so. Here are some simple tips for how to get children involved in good nutrition in your home:

- **Have your kids assist in the meal planning process.** They will be more likely to enjoy the meal and help with meal preparation if they are more actively involved.
- **Kids like to choose.** Give them two healthy options and let them select what they would prefer.
- **Small steps add up to big changes.** If you are trying to encourage your family to eat whole grain pasta instead of regular pasta, try a combination of half enriched, half whole grain until your family can adjust to the differences in taste and texture.
- **Add veggies to everything.** Try adding chopped veggies to your typical stews, soups, sauces and casseroles.
- **Don't eliminate a favorite food, but encourage moderation.** Offer a fun size candy bar instead of regular size.

Surrounding children with healthier options leaves them no choice but to eat better food. You can help set your family up for success by making these small changes: eat more fruits and vegetables, consume less sugar and fat, eat healthier snacks, watch portion sizes, and eat together as a family.



Fruits & Vegetables

- Kids should eat five fruits & vegetables a day
- Serve fresh, frozen, and canned fruits and vegetables; they all count
- Provide fruit or carrot sticks as great snacks
- Offer 100% juice, with no added sugar – limit to no more than 4-6 oz



Healthy Choices to Reduce Fat and Sugar

- Switch to low or non-fat milk, yogurt and cheese
- Choose lean cuts of meat like skinless chicken or extra lean ground beef for hamburgers or pasta sauces
- Substitute water or low-fat milk for sodas or sweetened beverages - drink less sugar-sweetened drinks
- Switch to lower sugar breakfast cereals – look for cereals with no more than 6 g of sugar per serving



Snacks

- Leave a bowl of fruit or carrot sticks on the kitchen table
- Have snacks that require permission (cookies), versus snacks that kids can take freely (fresh fruit)
- Save "treats" for special occasions
- Have kids drink water at snack time



Portion Size

- Kids are smaller than adults and should eat smaller portions
- Use smaller plates for kids
- Don't force kids to clean their plates if they are full
- Start with a small portion. Children can have seconds if they are still hungry



Eat Together

- Family meals focus on eating and enjoying food and each other
- Eating together is a chance to model good behavior
- Regularly scheduled meal and snack times help kids learn structure for eating
- Children who eat dinner with their families eat less fatty foods, & consume more fruits and vegetables.



Physical Activity & The Family

When your time is already limited, how do you find time away from the family to work out? The solution: make family time activity time! Engaging in physical activity as a family can be a fun way to get everyone moving. “Parents need to become role models for their children at an early age. If your children see that you are physically active and are having fun while you exercise, they are more likely to be active and stay active later in their lives.” –CDC.

Whether it's taking a family walk on a Saturday morning or after dinner, or washing the car together, encourage your family to get active to maintain a healthy weight. It's up to you to choose the activities that are right for you and your family. And, it's also up to you to stick with it. It is easy to spend a lot of time sitting in front of the computer or television. It's the same for kids. They spend hours sitting at their school desks, sitting at home doing homework, and sitting in front of the TV or computer.

Fight the urge to slouch on the couch. Instead, get up and go. Set an example for the kids in your life. Here are a few activities and steps you and your family can consider to get started on a path to a healthier lifestyle:

Walk Whenever Possible

- Give children toys that encourage physical activity like balls, kites, and jump ropes
- Encourage children to join a sports team or try a new physical activity
- Limit TV time and keep the TV out of a child's bedroom
- Facilitate a safe walk to and from school
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator
- Walk around the block after a meal
- Make a new house rule: no sitting still during television commercials
- Find time to spend together doing a fun activity: park day, swim day or bike day
- Issue a family challenge to see who can be the first to achieve a Presidential Active Lifestyle Award by committing to physical activity five days a week, for six weeks - adults and children can both receive the award
- Keep track of tips you've tried with a [tracking sheet](#) 

Move More in Your Home

- Garden, or make home repairs
- Do yard work. Get your children to help rake, weed, or plant
- Work around the house. Ask your children to help with active chores
- Wash the car by hand

Live Actively

- Join an exercise group, and enroll your children in community sports activities
- Do sit-ups in front of the TV - have a sit-up competition with your kids
- Pace the sidelines at kids' athletic games
- Choose an activity that fits daily life
- Use an exercise video if the weather is bad
- Avoid labor-saving devices, such as a remote control or electric mixers
- Play with your kids at least 30 minutes a day
- Dance to music... with your kids
- Choose activities everyone enjoys
- Explore new physical activities
- Give yourself a gold star with non-food related rewards, such as a family day at the park, lake, or zoo
- Swim with your kids
- Buy a set of hand weights and play a round of Simon Says with your kids—you do it with the weights, they do it without
- Create a family “Physical Activity Jar”
 - Step 1: Select your jar and label it
 - Step 2: Write physical activities on small strips of paper, fold them in half, and put them in the jar.
 - Step 3: Play the game: whenever you are having family time, take turns choosing a physical activity out of the jar

References

1. www.letsmove.gov
2. <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov>