

HEALTHY LIFESTYLE TIPS FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

You can help your child make healthy choices by being a good role model and trying some of the following ideas at home:

Activity:

- Encourage active play **daily**.
- Start a “buddy club” to **organize a group of friends and make plans to be active** (swimming, bike rides, hiking, walking, etc.).
- Make activity a **part of your child’s daily schedule** and part of a family routine. Choose activities that the whole family can enjoy together.
- Start slowly and set small realistic goals. If 60 minutes of activity a day seems too much, try for **blocks of 10-20 minutes each**.
- Add activity in places you wouldn’t usually think about like, trying to **park as far away as possible** when shopping and walk to the store.
- Limit screen time and replace it with something else. Children who are 2 or older should have no more than 2 hours of screen time a day. (TV, video games, computer use). Children age 2 shouldn’t watch TV. Instead, try reading, coloring, chores, playing games or going outside.

Nutrition:

- Plan meals in advance and **ask your child for suggestions**. Take your child to the store to pick out fruit and vegetables themselves.
- Have healthy meal and snack foods readily available and on-hand. Keep less healthy choices out of the home.
- Develop a **regular meal and snack schedule**. Setting a schedule for meals and snacks helps keep your child from mindless snacking (grazing) during the day and keeps your child from eating too many high calorie snacks. Skipping meals also leads to overeating. Encourage and offer foods from all of the food groups at meals.
- **Eat breakfast daily**. Kids who eat breakfast are more successful in school and eat better throughout the day.
- Take time to **eat slowly**, enjoy food and let the body start digesting it. It takes about 20 minutes to feel full. Eat until satisfied, not stuffed!
- Cut out sugary drinks that provide empty calories. These drinks include regular pop, Kool-Aid, lemonade, juice, and sports drinks. **Better choices include water, flavored no-calorie beverages, and skim milk** which has calcium and Vitamin D for bone health.

- Limit extra calories in sugary and fatty snacks and meals. **Limit fast food to two or less times per week.** Bigger sizes, fried foods, salad dressings, cookies, candy, regular soda, and chips can add a lot of extra calories. Instead try eating more fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy products or lean meats for meals and snacks.
- **Eat together as a family as often as possible with the TV off.** Make mealtimes pleasant and a time for the family to get together and talk to each other.
- Instead of serving meals family style (passing the food around the table), **serve meals hotel-style (bring the plate to the table with foods already on them).** Pack up and put leftovers away before eating.
- **Write down everything your family eats** to help stop them from overeating.

Lifestyles:

- Help your child help themselves get healthy. Get a team (supportive people/family) together to help your child make healthy changes. Let other people know how they can help your family.
- Encourage and practice **good sleeping habits.** Be sure to plan to wake up in enough time to have a healthy breakfast.

Attitudes:

- Ask your doctor to help you set **reasonable weight goals** for your child. **Stay positive,** getting healthy takes time and patience.
- If your family slips along the way to getting healthy, don't panic, just get right back on track.
- **Praise your child for making healthy choices.** Catch your child "being healthy" whenever possible and offer plenty of praise. Let them know you support their health efforts. Children like to be rewarded for positive behaviors. An encouraging word, hug, or activity time with a parent is worth more than candy. These actions build children's self-esteem without adding extra calories.
- Nothing fancy is needed to get healthy, just **move your body more and eat smarter.**

Healthy lifestyles should be a family commitment that involves parents, caregivers and siblings. Don't single out one child to make changes. Remember, healthy lifestyles benefit everyone!