

HEALTHFUL *Tips*

EAT RIGHT

Make family meals a habit. Children who sit down with their families to a home-cooked meal at the table are less likely to be overweight than those who eat out or bring food in. They also eat more fruits and vegetables and less soda and fat. Check schedules and plan for family meal times. It doesn't have to be dinner. How about breakfast or a weekend brunch?

Kids will eat what you bring into the house. Try not to buy prepackaged foods that are high in sugar or fat. Choose foods that are closest to nature—fresh fruits (or canned without added sugar), whole grains, a mix of colorful vegetables, lean meat/fish/poultry, and low fat dairy products.

Don't make your child eat when he or she isn't hungry—it's OK if not every drink or every meal gets finished.

Find nonfood ways to comfort a child such as sitting quietly with them, reading a book with them, a warm bubble bath, soothing music or talking to grandma on the phone.

Find nonfood ways to reward a child such as using a "star chart" to reinforce wanted behavior, praise, going to the movies, purchasing a game, a desired activity, and keep small toys or sugar free gum on hand for little rewards.

Don't offer dessert as a reward for finishing a meal. Doing this teaches your child to value sweets more than other foods. In place of desserts, make fresh fruit a part of your meal.

Don't eat at fast-food restaurants more than once a week.

Get in the habit of breakfast—kids learn better when they eat a healthy breakfast. They are also less likely to overeat later in the day.

Have healthy snacks quickly accessible. Kids are more likely to eat an orange if it has already been peeled and sectioned or grab an apple that has been washed and is sitting on the counter.

Most kids go through finicky phases, refusing anything but one or two favorite foods. Kids need to taste things about 10 times before they will accept it. Most children will learn to like new foods on their own—as long you don't insist! Kids

are more likely to eat foods they help prepare, so let them lend a hand in the kitchen.

Eat a wide variety of healthy foods to set a good example. If you are eating it, the kids may want to taste it out of curiosity. Invite kids to try new foods, but never insist.

Take kids to the grocery store with you and get them involved in selecting healthful foods. Teach them how to read labels and estimate quantities for servings for the whole family.

Food is a great opportunity for learning life lessons. Reading recipes, learning cooking basics, minding table manners and cleaning up in the kitchen all help teach skills needed throughout life. And kids build self-esteem while learning these new skills.

HEALTHY BREAKFAST IDEAS

- low-fat, low sugar yogurt
- oatmeal with low-fat milk
- whole-wheat toast with a thin spread of peanut butter
- fruit smoothie made with frozen fruit, low-fat, low sugar yogurt, and juice or milk
- low-sugar cereal with low fat milk
- lower sugar granola or breakfast bars for kids on the run

HEALTHY SNACK IDEAS

- low-fat, low sugar yogurt
- rice cakes
- fresh or canned fruits
- sliced vegetables or baby carrots
- dried fruit and nut mix (no more than a small handful)
- popcorn (light microwaved or air popped)
- low-sugar cereal

BROWN BAG LUNCHES

- use cookie cutters to make ordinary sandwiches exciting
- pack frozen grapes, apple wedges (soak in orange juice first), carrot sticks, and single serving milk boxes
- salads with leftover sliced chicken breast are a great alternative to sandwiches

HEALTHY DRINKS

- most calories should come from food rather than drinks.
- water

- low fat or skim milk
- no added sugar chocolate milk
- 100% fruit juice (limit to 6 oz a day)
- calorie free drinks made with Splenda

GET ACTIVE

Start a new family tradition: Family Fitness Time! It just makes sense to combine family time with fitness activities. What a great way to teach kids about the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Try these ideas to get your family fitness time going:

- Schedule a regular time physical activity
- Work around other commitments and schedule family fitness time. Mark it on your calendar. Take advantage of the weekends when you all may have more time.
- Take turns selecting an activity for the family to do as a group. Make a list of activities to choose from and then take turns choosing the activity. Choose different activities that allow your children to feel good about themselves. Try different things that you haven't done before. Rock climbing, hiking on nearby trails, taking a class together, water polo or flashlight tag. Visit museums, the zoo, or an aquarium. Your family can walk for hours and not realize it. Take a walk after dinner as a family.
- Write down the selected activity on the calendar giving your children something to look forward to and you'll know in advance exactly what you'll be doing.
- Start a log of daily fitness activities. You can keep a log on the refrigerator so that everyone knows what activity you will be participating in on the various days. Allow you children to "check-off" each activity after it is completed. This gives them a feeling of accomplishment. After a few weeks your entire family will see not only how much time they've spent together but also how much activity they've been able to fit into their day.
- In addition to your schedule family fitness time, encourage kids to be involved in more activities daily—walking the dog, washing the car, taking stairs instead of elevators, riding bike, shooting hoops in the drive, jumping rope, jumping on the trampoline, playing 4 square or playing tag.