

Fact Sheets for Families

Healthy Eating and Activity

for Your Child

Sometimes small changes can make a big difference in nutrition and activity. To keep your child healthy and active try making one or more changes from this list of ideas:

Ways to improve eating habits:

- Offer water rather than sweetened drinks when your child is thirsty.
- Show your child that you like a variety of healthy foods.
- Don't use food or candy as a reward.
- Read books about healthy food to your child.
- Avoid books and coloring books that promote junk food or specific products.
- Serve child size portions to your child.
- Pay attention to signs that a child is hungry or full. Don't require a clean plate!
- Have children help cook meals and help prepare snacks.
- Serve a variety of foods including fruits, vegetables and whole grains.
- Make happy and pleasant family mealtimes, where everyone is together, a priority.
- Ask children to help set and clear the table.
- Discuss the events of the day at mealtime.
- Turn off the TV and radio at mealtime.
- Avoid fast food and eating on the run.
- Be aware of junk food advertising that is aimed at children.

- Shop at Farmers' Markets and take your children with you.

Ways to encourage movement and activity:

- Children are naturally active and curious. Encourage these natural traits.
- Take time for outdoor play. Play with your child.
- Use music and dance to encourage movement.
- Show your child that you like to exercise.
- Make play and activity fun and age appropriate.
- Turn household chores into a game.
- Limit TV and computer time to no more than 60 minutes per day.
- No TV for children under age 2.
- Children should not be still for more than 60 minutes at a time unless asleep.
- Work to improve parks and recreation in your neighborhood.
- Walk instead of driving.
- Take the stairs.
- Use non-food activities for fundraising at school and in your community, for example, read-a-thons or walk-a-thons.
- Be an advocate for physical health at school and child care.

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References and Resources:

Strategic Alliance ENACT at www.preventioninstitute.org/enact/childcare/index.html

Active Start, Physical Activity Guidelines for Children Birth to Five Years, 2002, NASPE



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