

Family Times

NEWSLETTER



NEWSLETTER FOR ADULTS WITH CHILDREN AGES 5-8

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Nutrition and Physical Activity

Remember when your child was just born? You probably thought a lot about your baby's health because a healthy start in life is so important. Your child is now at an important stage in life as he or she begins school. Even though you may be thinking a lot about the new school routine, remember to establish a healthy routine. Now is the best time to look at the health habits of your child – and of the entire family.

Many parents today are concerned about their child's weight. Overweight is an epidemic. It often begins during childhood and ends with lifelong health problems and disease. The habits, routines, and role models experienced by your child today will make a BIG difference in his or her health both now and in the future.

This *Family Times* includes ways your family can get off to a healthy start and prevent problems with overweight.

Talk to your health care provider about your child's weight. Ask about the Body Mass Index measurement.

If there are weight concerns, parents, family members, doctors, teachers, and others can become an effective team. Together, you can create an environment to support your child in making healthy changes in activity and eating behaviors.

Healthy Eating

Good nutrition and a balanced diet are of primary importance in monitoring your family's weight. Good nutrition habits will benefit both parent and child.

The following strategies can encourage smart eating habits by your family.

- Have regular family meals.
- Serve a variety of healthy foods and snacks.
- Be a role model by eating healthy foods yourself.
- Avoid battles over food.
- Involve children in the cooking process.
- Encourage tasting a variety of foods.
- Avoid fast-food and concession choices that are high in fat and sugar.

Keep Them Moving

Childhood obesity and an inactive lifestyle go hand-in-hand. Generally, kids who are physically inactive at home are inactive at other places. They also tend to take the least active role in organized activities.

Many times, obese children want to participate in an activity but feel embarrassed and awkward. To help "activate" kids, start by decreasing the time they are glued to the TV. Cutting back from more than 21 hours of TV watching a week (a typical American dose) to 7 hours a week could cut a child's risk of obesity by a third.

Kids manage their weight best by making permanent lifestyle changes such as limiting TV to a few shows a week, eating right, and being active with their family. If parents, teachers, and friends provide activity as an alternative to inactivity, kids can try active options and turn them into healthy habits.

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To Make a Difference

- Work to create a healthy environment for your family.
- Model healthy behaviors every day.
- Stay active together.
- Stick to a routine of healthy meals and snacks.
- Eat at least 5 fruit and vegetable servings each day.
- Give your children healthy options and let them choose.
- To improve your family's health habits, make one small change at a time. Be patient and don't give up.
- Remember: Your children's health depends on you.



It is important for parents to act as positive role models when trying to get their children to become more active. The best way to be a role model is to incorporate activity into every aspect of your child's life and to be active along with your child.

Simple Ways Families Can Add Activity to Daily Life

- Identify opportunities for exercise in all areas of life (walk to do errands, take stairs instead of elevators).
- Walk the dog.
- Buy toys and gifts that promote physical activity (balls, active games, sports equipment).
- Adopt a highway, trail, or park as a family activity.
- Remember that household chores are exercise (working in the yard, washing the car, cleaning house, shoveling snow).
- Encourage job-seeking kids to look for active jobs (carrying newspapers, mowing lawns).
- Find fun, physically active ways to celebrate special occasions (a hike and a picnic for a birthday party).
- Add exercise to weekend plans (hike, fly kites, swim).

- Plan one special physical activity event each week for the whole family (walk, hike, bike).
- Join activity programs at school (intramural sports, athletic teams).
- Encourage friends or relatives to join you.

Parents can also help create an active environment by supporting physical education in schools and recreation in communities, including bike paths and routes, night basketball leagues, hiking trails, and playgrounds. In addition, parents can coach or assist with kids' sports.

To learn more, check these Web sites:

<http://fitfamilyfitkids.com>
<http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov>
www.bam.gov/flash_elli.html
www.kidshealth.org
www.shapingamericasyouth.com



The Book Nook

Your child will enjoy books about everyday life, including food, play time, and family mealtime:

Oh, the Things You Can Do That Are Good for You! by Tish Rabe

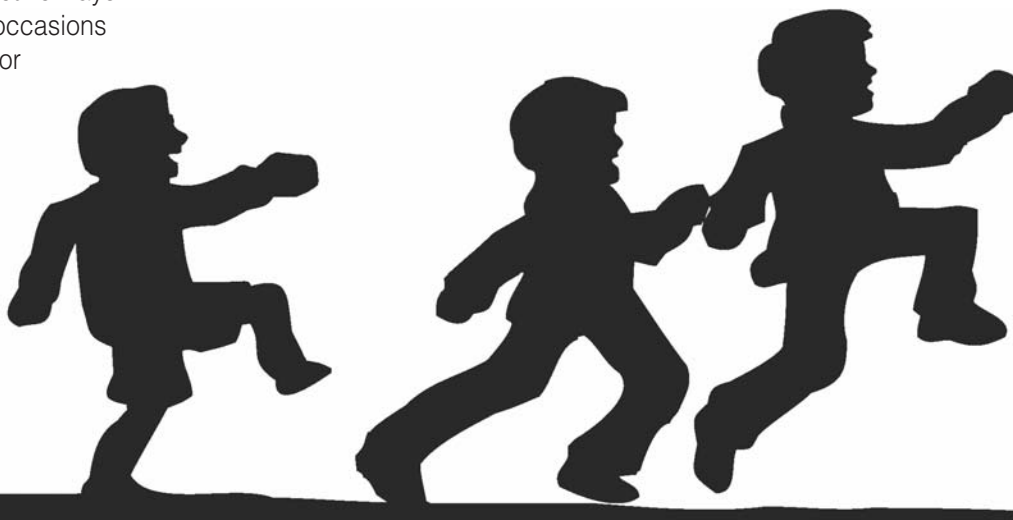
Berenstain Bears and Too Much TV by Stan and Jan Berenstain

Oliver's Vegetables by Vivian French

Let's Play Tag by Sarah Hughes

Reference

Dietz W.H. Jr., Gortmaker S.L., "Do we fatten our children at the television set? Obesity and television viewing in children and adolescents," *Pediatrics* 1985;75(5):807-812.



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