

Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Your Child

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

Ways to encourage healthy eating:

- Offer water, rather than sugary 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 insist on a clean plate!
- Have children help cook meals and prepare snacks.
- Serve a variety of foods including fruits, vegetables and whole grains.
- Make happy and pleasant family mealtimes where everyone enjoys eating together.
- Ask children to help set and clear the table.
- Discuss the events of the day at mealtime.
- Turn off cell phones, 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 physical activity:

- Children are naturally active and curious. Encourage these natural traits!
- Make 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.
- Avoid screen time (except for video-chatting) for children under age 18 months.
- Limit screen time to 60 minutes of high-quality programs per day, viewed with an adult, for children ages 2-5 years.
- Young 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.

References and Resources:

SHAPE America, Early Childhood Resources for Teacher's Toolbox (on physical activity) https://www.shapeamerica.org/publications/resources/teachingtools/teachertoolbox/Teachers_Toolbox_EC.aspx

KidsHealth, Healthy Eating <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/habits.html>



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