

Recommendations for Families

Many experts agree that the family environment plays the largest role in determining life-long health habits. Currently, it is estimated that 3 out of 5 people deal with excess weight concerns while 1 out of 2 don't get the necessary physical activity and the necessary nutrition to address those weight concerns and decrease the chances of illness.

Here are some tips to help your family establish habits that will increase the chances of moving more and eating better.

Realize every family must find the foods and activities that fit THEIR family the best. Some of these recommendations will fit perfectly. Some will have to be changed a bit to fit your family's lifestyle and environment.

*One last note, the value you place on what eating better and moving more provides will determine how well you adapt to these changes in your life.

Nutrition

- Encourage every member of the family to help plan and prepare meals, then eat as many meals as possible together.
 - Have an ethnic foods night once a week. Have family members take turns picking the type of food, help to find recipes, and help prepare the meal. Enjoy the meals together and discuss the culture whose food you are eating.
 - Mexican
 - Greek
 - Thai
 - Encourage everyone in the family to help prepare the meal. One person could be in charge of each dish and helping to set the table.
- Introduce a new healthy food, such as a fruit or vegetable, to your family on a regular basis. You may discover some new favorites!
 - Before eating a meal sit every member around the table, divide a fruit or vegetable into equal pieces for everyone, then eat it. Use this to introduce new foods from time to time.
 - Carrot
 - Apple
 - Mango
 - Celery
 - Make grocery shopping part of a family outing. Allow each person to pick one new food out of the produce section to try in the next couple of days.
- Drink water! Replace high-calorie drinks, such as soda, with low or fat-free milk and water. Drink juice sparingly and only 100% fruit juice.

- Encourage every member of the family to make it a habit of carrying a water bottle with them. Use this to determine how much water you typically drink then try to increase that amount!
- Don't use food to comfort or to reward; this applies to yourself and all members of the family.
 - Allow the honored individual to choose an outdoor activity or piece of sports or play equipment as a reward instead!
 - A new kite
 - Time at the pool
 - Extra time with friends at the park
 - A new baseball cap

Exercise

- Recent research shows that children typically spend 5.5 - 6.5 hours in front of a screen each day. Limit the amount of screen time the family is exposed to. This includes time in front of the TV, video games, and the computer. Instead, play games or spend time being active outside during leisure time.
 - Designate game nights with the family. Allow other friends and family to join you at this time.
 - Twister
 - Checkers
 - Charades
 - Go outside and play the sports instead of watching it on TV!
 - Shoot hoops
 - Toss a football
 - Start a neighborhood roller hockey league
- Be active together as a family and make it part of a daily routine. This might involve going to the park together to play hoops, going on a bike ride, or gardening together.
 - Walk to work or school together
 - Take pets out on a run before a meal
- Include physical activity when you go on vacation.
 - When planning the vacation allow each member of the family to choose an activity for one of the days.
 - Bike riding
 - Playing at the beach
 - Mini-golf
 - Laser tag

Teach and model good eating and exercise habits today. The habits your family establishes now will determine their health throughout the rest of their lives!

<http://familydoctor.org/344.xml>

<http://familydoctor.org/866.xml>

<http://www.lpfch.org/informed/facts/weight/tips.html>