

10 Tips to Help Prevent Childhood Obesity

Prioritize! Sometimes it's tough to find time for physical activity. Set aside 30 minutes every day each week to stay physically active with your kids and if something comes up--simply reschedule, but don't cancel. If needed, identify a new time to replace the time that was missed. This will not only boost their health, but yours too!

Engage Together! There are several FUN-tivities that you can do to encourage kids to stay active. See if your local community is planning to have a charity walk/run and train as family. It'll be a fun, team-building experience while communicating the importance of maintaining good health. Other activities include biking, household chores, walking to the park, etc.

Plan for Health. Involve children when preparing nutritious meals and educate them on making healthy decisions. Plan what and how much to eat. Select smart options when it comes to grocery shopping.

It's all About the Portion! Know when enough is ENOUGH. It generally takes 20 minutes for your body to send "full signals". To prevent overeating, maintain a healthy portion of food by using smaller plates at home or dividing the cooked food into serving sizes prior to eating.

Educate. Teach children the importance of good nutrition and health by highlighting the benefits of having a strong and healthy body. Encourage your kids to develop healthy habits and act as a healthy role model for them. Differentiate between snacks that require permission (cookies), versus snacks that kids can take freely (fresh or dried fruit).

ZzzzzZZ... Adults need a good night's rest to function productively the next day, and the same applies to children. Most children under age 5 need to sleep for 11 hours or more per day, children age 5 to 10 need 10 hours of sleep or more per day, and children over age 10 need at least 9 hours per day.

A Gift Worth Giving! Whether it's a birthday, surprise party, or a special occasion that involves getting a gift for a child, think ahead. For younger children, try giving toys that can encourage physical activity, such as kites, jump ropes, or sports-related toys. Those who feel supported by friends and families who are interested in physical activity are more likely to participate.

Establish Rules! Brainstorm a list of "house rules" with your family that communicate "health and wellness". Be creative: Make a "house rule" that you can't sit during commercial breaks while watching television. Encourage everyone in the living room to do jumping jacks, stretches, or a few bicep curls instead.

Make Food Fun! A majority of children are visual learners, so it's no surprise they are attracted to those sugary snacks that are advertised as "fun foods". You can attract kids to healthy foods with a little creativity. Fruits can easily be shaped into fun objects with cookie cutters or sliced to form a "smiley face". Experiment and see how creative you can be!

After Meal Exercises! Ride your bikes or walk around the block with your family after eating dinner. Taking time for a night stroll can improve everyone's cardiovascular fitness and outlook.



These childhood obesity tips were provided by the First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move Campaign and Health and Services (HHS). For more information about the 2010 DoD Monthly Wellness Awareness Campaigns, please visit: www.cpms.osd.mil/wellness

