Tips for Elementary Schools

5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables

Fruits and vegetables can provide children with a lot of nutrients, water, fiber, and phytochemicals that help prevent diseases and keep their bodies healthy. There are many school-based programs designed to increase student fruit and vegetable consumption – contact the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at 1-877-382-9185 to identify programs to meet your needs!

- In the classroom, use fruit- and vegetable-based activities to help meet standards in core subjects like math, science, and language arts - track daily servings, set goals, conduct taste-tests, practice simple recipes and assemble a cookbook!
- In the cafeteria, place the most nutrient-dense entrée ahead of other entrées, give vegetable dishes creative names like "X-Ray Vision Carrots," display whole fruit with contrasting colors in attractive bowls, and prompt students to take a piece of fruit with their lunch.
- Start a school garden where children can experience how fruits and vegetables grow and taste!

2 or fewer hours of recreational screen time+

+review guidelines on parenting strategies to ensure quality screen time (AAP, 2015)

Recreational screen time is free time spent in front of screens – like televisions, video games, and the internet. It is possible to get enough physical activity and still engage in an unhealthy amount of screen time.

- Promote National Screen-Free Week, usually in early May, as a school event. See www.screenfree.org for details.
- Work to foster children's love for music and dancing, reading, making art, exploring the outdoors, interacting with others, building, creating, and imagining.
- Help educate parents about healthy screen time habits – like removing televisions from bedrooms, turning off media during mealtimes, and setting and enforcing limits.

1 or more hours of physical activity

Children love to play, and active play time is important for many reasons: it gives children opportunities to move their bodies, use their imagination, practice problem solving, and engage in social interactions that promote self-awareness and empathy. Plus, it increases physical fitness!

- Give children time to play outside during the school day in every season! Provide access to playgrounds, grass fields, and portable equipment, like balls.
- Replace food-related fundraisers, like selling cookie dough, with active fundraisers, like walk-a-thons.
- Examine the physical education curriculum and make improvements to ensure that children spend as much time as possible being active and not waiting in lines.

0 sweetened beverages

It is important to drink fluids to stay healthy, but sweetened beverages add extra sugar and calories to the diet. The only sweetened beverage allowed for sale to elementary school students, according to USDA regulations updated June 2013, is flavored nonfat milk.

- Ensure easy access to free drinking water that is desirable to drink. Check the fountains and clean or replace them, if necessary. Consider adding hydration stations and providing students with reusable water bottles to fill at the stations.
- Make water the norm for quenching thirst – drink water when you are thirsty and offer water to thirsty children.
- Opt not to sell flavored milk, which has added sugar. Place white milk in front of flavored milk in the lunch cooler.

Contact 5210 at 5210@psu.edu or www.5210.psu.edu for help identifying programs and resources targeting nutrition, physical activity, and screen time!

This material is based upon work supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Office of Family Policy, Children and Youth, U.S. Department of Defense under Award No. 2010-48709-21867 developed in collaboration with The Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State University. 5210 Healthy Children is adapted from Let's Go! www.letsgo.org.

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