Tips for Families

5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables

Fruits and vegetables provide a lot of nutrients and water without a lot of calories. They also contain fiber and a variety of phytochemicals that help prevent cancer, heart disease, and other diseases. Young children often reject new foods at first – it may take several exposures to a new food before it is accepted so keep trying!

- Prepare meals and snacks at home using fruits and vegetables and let children help in the kitchen so they learn how to make healthy foods.
- Eat together as a family and model healthy eating to your children.
- Offer a variety of fruits and vegetables and other healthy foods at planned times throughout the day. Let children choose whether and how much they eat.

2 or fewer hours of recreational screen time+

*review guidelines on parenting strategies to encourage quality screen time (AAP, 2015)

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 – so encourage your family to find other fun ways to spend their free time!

- Same parenting rules apply to screen time – set limits.
- Role modeling is critical – limit your own screen time.
- Children learn better from live interactions than from passive videos – talk to your children!
- Content matters – review what your children are watching and don’t just set a timer!

1 or more hours of physical activity

Moving your body is a great way to burn calories, improve your mood, boost your energy, prevent cancer and cardiovascular diseases, and help you sleep better at night – plus, it can be a lot of fun! Look for activities your family can enjoy together so everyone can reap the benefits and help keep one another stay on track!

- Use activities instead of foods as incentives – a trip to the park, sledding hill, laser tag arena, skating rink, batting cage, or community pool can be a great alternative to the ice cream shop to celebrate a job well done.
- Walk or bike as a family to get where you’re going.
- Set up activity dates with like-minded families or sign up your family for a charity walk – if you’re accountable to someone else you may be more likely to stay active.

0 sweetened beverages

It is important to drink fluids to stay healthy, but sweetened beverages add extra sugar and calories to the diet. Watch out for drinks with the following ingredients: sugar, honey, sweetener, syrup (e.g., corn syrup, brown rice syrup), and/or ingredients ending in “ose” (e.g., glucose, dextrose).

- Make water the norm for quenching thirst – drink water when you are thirsty and offer water to thirsty children.
- Sparkling water, still water with slices of lemon, and fruity herbal iced teas are fun alternatives to plain water.
- Nonfat and 1% milk and 100% vegetable juices contain beneficial nutrients and calories, so think of them as foods that contribute towards your family’s healthy diet.

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 Military Children is adopted from Let’s Go! www.letsgo.org as of July 11, 2017
References:


