



CHILDREN IN BALANCE

A Family Plan for a Healthier Future

As the decision makers in the household, you—the parents and guardians—have the power to make important changes. Aim for lifestyle changes for the family as a whole rather than focusing on an individual or centering goals on weight loss.

Ten things you can do:

1. **Eat five servings of fruit and vegetables a day.** After breakfast, it's not a meal if it doesn't include a vegetable.
2. **Limit eating out to a few times a week.** Meals away from home tend to be larger in portions and higher in calories.
3. **Cook together.** Involve family members in food preparation.
4. **Get supermarket smart.** Navigate the aisles to minimize the “Nag Factor” and maximize the nutritional quality of your cart.
 - Make lists to help avoid impulse buys.
 - Shop on the perimeter of the store first.
 - Buy frozen produce if fresh is too expensive. Both are healthy.
 - Try to minimize buying “prepared” foods.
5. **Increase outdoor time.** Take family activities outside. Go for walks after dinner and on the weekends.
6. **Walk to school.** It is a great way to get exercise.
 - Is there a community effort in your town to encourage a “walking school bus”, or increased # of crossing guards, or better crosswalks?
 - Check out these websites for more information:
<http://www.iwalktoschool.org/>
<http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/>
7. **Get an hour of physical activity a day.** Activity is not just sports. Gardening, dancing, creative movement, walking to stores, and walking the dog, are all forms of exercise.
8. **Limit screen time.** Aim for no more than two hours of screen time a day for your children. This includes the computer, television, and videogames.
9. **Use community resources.**
 - These include the Parks and Recreation department, YMCAs, Boys and Girls Club, JCCs, community health organizations, Girl and Boy Scouts.
 - If using after school programs, ask:
 - What kinds of snacks are served? What physical activity is provided?
 - What kind of space does the program have or use? If it is a small space, is there a larger gathering place like a gym?
10. **Spark change in your community.**
 - How can the environments that you and your children spend time in be improved? Consider becoming an advocate for healthier snacks in after school and sports environments.
 - Make your workplace and meetings healthier. Does food need to be served at every meeting? What kinds of foods and snacks could be more nutritious?
 - Get involved in the community through the PTA, school wellness committees, Community Development Corporations (CDC's), immigrant organizations, etc.