

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one-third of adults are obese, and nearly 20 percent of children and adolescents are overweight or obese. Overweight and obesity in children has tripled in the last 30 years.

What's behind these alarming statistics? The top reasons are sedentary lifestyle (hours in front of TV, computer and videogame screens), unhealthy food choices and a lack of exercise. But it's not too late to make healthy changes in your family's habits.

Make it a Family Project

Focus on things you can do together to improve everyone's health. As the parent, you should model the behavior you want to encourage in your children. When your children see you being active and eating healthy foods, they are more likely to copy your behavior. Try these ideas to get everyone moving:

- > **Plan active outings** such as a trip to the zoo, swimming, bowling, a bike ride, trip to a museum or even volunteering at a food pantry.
- > **Make new routines**—take a walk every night after dinner instead of watching TV.
- > **Encourage outdoor play** with active toys like balls, jump ropes, skates and squirt guns.
- > **Get everyone involved** in active games like catch, Simon Says and charades.
- > **Buy inexpensive pedometers** and compete to see who takes the most steps.
- > **Set limits** on the amount of time your family spends on TV, computers and video games. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than one to two hours of screen time per day.

Make Healthy Eating a Priority

Help your family make good food choices by offering them healthy options.

- > **Serve a wide variety** of foods, such as whole grains, vegetables and fruits, low-fat dairy products and lean protein.
- > **Visit farmer's markets** together and let your children select new foods to try.
- > **Involve everyone** in planning and preparing meals. Children may be more willing to eat the dishes they help fix.
- > **Provide healthier snacks** such as dried and fresh fruit, vegetables, low-fat dairy products and air-popped popcorn.
- > **Limit sugar.** Choose cereals with low or no added sugar. Replace sodas and fruit-flavored drinks with water or milk
- > **Don't be too strict.** In small amounts, sweets or food from fast food restaurants can still have a place in a healthy diet.

Additional Information

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