



# balancing act

Growing Up  
Healthy

From The Harvard  
Pilgrim Health  
Care Foundation



*Healthy lifestyle ideas  
and resources for families*

# introduction

**A**s parents and caregivers we want our children to be healthy and thrive. Making sure they're eating nutritious foods and getting plenty of physical activity are two key ways to help them grow up strong and happy.

Between work, family and community obligations, we know we can't always do it all and that it's important to find some sort of balance. The same can be said for eating well and exercising. It's not always easy to do, but finding a balance is essential for ensuring healthy futures for our children and families.

The good news is that adopting good eating habits and being active doesn't have to be drastic or difficult. The notion that "it's all about moderation" is true. Start with small changes, and over time they'll become healthy lifestyle habits that your whole family can be proud of.

This guide has been designed to give you some practical ideas and tips for eating healthfully and getting active. Try some out and see what works for your kids and family. Start today and have fun building a healthy lifestyle together!

## Growing Up Healthy

Growing Up Healthy is the Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation's five-year initiative to help prevent childhood obesity in Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine.

For more information, including our *Tipping the Scales* and *Dishing Out Healthy School Meals* reports, visit: [www.harvardpilgrim.org/foundation](http://www.harvardpilgrim.org/foundation).



it  
matters!

Healthy habits kids  
learn when they're  
young can

stay with  
them the  
rest of  
their lives.

Healthy  
kids are  
confident  
and happy kids!

**Making healthy food choices** and getting moving as a family helps kids build lifestyle habits that are good for their physical and emotional well-being. Here's how healthy eating and regular activity can help them as they grow.

#### **Healthy hearts**

Building a strong and healthy heart begins by getting regular exercise. Experts recommend 60 minutes a day for kids and 30 to 60 minutes a day for adults.

#### **Strong bones and teeth**

Kids' growing bodies need calcium and vitamin D, which are essential for developing strong bones and teeth. Low-fat dairy, broccoli, almonds and salmon are all rich sources of calcium.

#### **Easy breathing**

Regular physical activity ensures that kids will be able to breathe easy when they're running and playing at home or at school.

#### **Confidence and self-esteem**

Healthy kids are more likely to feel confident in themselves—in the classroom, on the playing field and interacting with other kids. This can continue into adulthood and help shape the people they grow up to be.

# why it all matters

## Balanced blood sugar

Giving kids healthy foods and beverages every day can lower their chances of having blood sugar problems, which can lead to Type 2 diabetes. Start by giving them more water and low-fat milk to drink and cutting back on soda and juices.

## Growing up strong and happy

Help kids develop healthy habits while they're young, and it will be easier to put healthy lifestyle changes in motion that can help them grow into healthy and happy adults.



## On the Web:

Let's Move!  
[www.letsmove.gov](http://www.letsmove.gov)

Build Healthy Kids  
[www.buildhealthykids.com](http://www.buildhealthykids.com)

Alliance for a Healthier Generation  
[www.healthiergeneration.org](http://www.healthiergeneration.org)

Action for Healthy Kids  
[www.actionforhealthykids.org](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org)



# 10 tips for healthy

- 1 Make it a family affair.** Cook, shop and eat together as a family. Involving kids will help them feel empowered to make healthy decisions.
- 2 Be a healthy role model.** Kids are more likely to make healthy choices if they see you making healthy choices.
- 3 Start small.** Healthier lifestyles begin with small changes that you make over time.
- 4 Be physically active whenever possible.** Kids should aim for at least 60 minutes of physical activity a day; adults should go for 30 to 60 minutes. Breaking it up into shorter periods makes it easier, and every little bit counts.
- 5 Offer choices.** Offer carrots or celery as snacks, or water or milk as drinks. This lets children make decisions but keeps you in control of options.
- 6 Rethink rewards.** Forget about the extra hour of TV or an ice cream sundae. Find new ways to celebrate accomplishments—go for a walk together or invite a friend over to play.

## On the Web:

Let's Go!  
[www.letsgo.org](http://www.letsgo.org)

YMCA: Build a Healthy Family Home  
[www.ymca.net/healthy-family-home](http://www.ymca.net/healthy-family-home)

WE CAN! Ways to Enhance Children's  
Activity and Nutrition  
[www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/  
heart/obesity/wecan](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan)

# Healthy families



**7 Have a healthy breakfast.** Starting out the day with a wholesome breakfast like oatmeal or whole grain cereal and fruit helps kids and adults focus and keeps you all from overeating later in the day.

**8 Allow only two hours of screen time per day.** Turn off the TV. Keep a list of other fun things to do, ask for help with dinner or play together.

**9 Be your child's advocate.** Lobby for recess, healthful school meals, safer streets, and more playgrounds and parks. Educate your family, friends and community about why eating healthy and getting moving matters.

**10 Remember: You're the boss.** At home, you are in charge of what your kids eat and what they do. Keep healthy foods in the house and limit TV and computer time.

## 5210 Every Day!

- **5** fruits and vegetables a day
- **2** or less hours of recreational screen time
- **1** hour or more of physical activity
- **0** sugary drinks, more water and low-fat milk



**LET'S GO!**

Learn more about 5210:  
[www.lets-go.org](http://www.lets-go.org)

# healthy ideas



## Replace soda

with low-fat milk or water.

Swap steak or a burger for

## chicken or salmon.

Instead of ordering out,

## cook together at home

and experiment in the kitchen.

**Adopting good eating habits** doesn't mean all or nothing. Start with small changes and remember that moderation is key to a balanced diet. You and your kids can still enjoy the foods that you love, but keep these tips in mind:

### Eat together

- Make a plan each week and decide which days you'll eat together as a family.
- Turn off the TV and other distractions while you're eating and you'll notice when you're full sooner.

### Portion size

- Split entrees when you go out and skip the super size meals at fast food restaurants.
- At home, try serving smaller portions to start and let your family know they can always ask for seconds when they finish what's on their plates.

### Eat more fruits and vegetables

- Aim for at least 2 servings of fruits and 3 servings of colorful vegetables a day.

### Cut back or eliminate sugary drinks

- Replace soda, juice and sugary sports drinks with water or low-fat or fat-free milk.

# healthy eating

## Watch out for fats

- Limit saturated fat by cutting back on meats, butter, whole milk, cheese and fried foods.
- For cooking, use mono- and poly-unsaturated fats like olive, canola and sunflower oils.

## Watch out for sodium

- Don't reach for the salt shaker right away. Taste your food without table salt before you sprinkle your meal with it.
- Be aware of the high sodium levels in processed foods—home cooked food will almost always have less sodium than packaged meals.

## Include healthy proteins

- Cut back on red meat—white meat chicken and turkey are better, lower-fat choices.

## Choose low-fat or fat-free dairy

- Milk and dairy products are key sources of calcium for kids' growing bones.
- Substitute whole milk and cheese with low-fat and fat-free versions.

## Add whole grains

- Aim for half of your grains to be whole grains. Add them gradually—choose whole grain versions of foods that your family may already enjoy.



### On the Web:

Choose My Plate  
[www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov)

Kids Eat Right  
[www.eatright.org/kids](http://www.eatright.org/kids)





### On the Web:

Kids Health  
[www.kidshealth.org/parent](http://www.kidshealth.org/parent)

Boys and Girls Clubs of America  
[www.bgca.org/whoweare/pages/findaclub.aspx](http://www.bgca.org/whoweare/pages/findaclub.aspx)

Playspace Finder  
[playspacefinder.kaboom.org](http://playspacefinder.kaboom.org)

Find a Farmers Market near you  
[search.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets](http://search.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets)

NFL Play 60 Kids  
[www.nflrush.com/play60](http://www.nflrush.com/play60)

Nature Rocks!  
[www.naturerocks.org](http://www.naturerocks.org)

**K**ids need at least one hour of exercise per day, and we can't always rely on recess and physical education class at school to provide it. Get active together as a family and make it fun. Remember: Any activity that gets you and your kids moving counts!

- ▶ **Be physically active whenever you can:** Find ways to fit in even short bursts of activity. Take stairs instead of elevators, go for a walk after dinner and park your car farther away from the store than usual. Even housework burns calories.
- ▶ **Try something new:** Encourage your children to try new activities to find something they enjoy.
- ▶ **Sign them up:** Listen to their interests and sign them up for a sports team, dance class or other fitness group.
- ▶ **Practice what you preach:** Get active with your kids and follow your own rules for limiting screen time for the entire family. Remember, kids take their cues from you.
- ▶ **Make exercise a reward, not a punishment:** If your kids help you make dinner, reward them with free time outside instead of doing dishes.



# active living

- ▶ **Create a list of "Top 10 Alternatives":** Help your kids remember all of the other activities they enjoy that don't involve TV or computers and make a list together.
- ▶ **Remove the tube:** Take TVs and computers out of your kids' bedrooms and your kitchen. Don't allow screen time during meals.
- ▶ **Get outside:** Go for a bike ride, shoot hoops, swim at the community pool or check out local parks.
- ▶ **Celebrate accomplishments:** Set goals together as a family and measure your accomplishments, then celebrate your successes by playing together.



## Get your family moving!

- Plant a garden together
- Get outside and play catch
- Plan family outings for the weekends:
  - Visit a local farmers market
  - Explore nearby parks and nature trails
  - Go ice skating or roller skating
- Play sports- or dance-themed video games that require you to move





**Find balance.**

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