

Bright Futures: Family Matters



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“We can make a commitment to promote vegetables and fruits and whole grains on every part of every menu. We can make portion sizes smaller and emphasize quality over quantity. And we can help create a culture—imagine this—where our kids ask for healthier options instead of resisting them.”
—First Lady Michelle Obama

GOOD NUTRITION FOR FAMILIES

“I’m hungry! What can I eat?” How we choose to answer this question impacts our general health and well-being. Everybody knows “good nutrition” is important, but achieving it isn’t always easy.

The Basics

Everyone’s nutrition needs are different, depending on age, sex, and health conditions. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has new guidelines to try to make it easier for us to eat healthy. **Choose My Plate**

(www.choosemyplate.gov) suggests:



Balancing Calories:

- *Enjoy your food, but eat less of it.* Portion size is a major factor in weight control. Restaurants serve huge amounts of food at a meal, far more than we need or can really enjoy.



Foods to Increase:

- *Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.* Research tells us that eating plenty of fruits and vegetables is far more important than we once thought. Protein—whether animal or vegetable—is important, but a balance of the food groups is best.
- *Make at least half your grains whole grains.* Processing grains strips them of valuable nutrients. Go for whole wheat and other whole grains.
- *Switch to fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk*

Foods to Decrease:

- *Choose foods with lower sodium (salt).* Too much salt leads to heart problems.
- *Drink water instead of sugary drinks.* Sodas and fruit drinks with added sugar are full of empty—and non-nutritious—calories.



It’s All in the Presentation

Serving healthy food means nothing if your family leaves it untouched on the plate! Another government-sponsored website, **Fruits and Veggies Matter** (www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov), allows you to look up specific fruits and vegetables and find healthy—and tasty—recipes to try. Try something new!

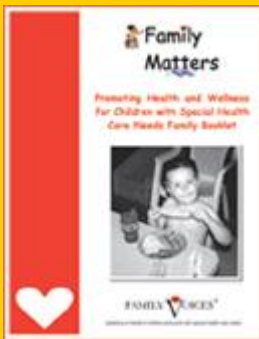
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RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES

Bright Futures Family Theme Sheet: Healthy Food & Eating: Find tips for families to help promote healthy eating, including age-specific suggestions at: <http://tinyurl.com/BF-Food-and-Eating>



Family Matters: Promoting Health and Wellness for Children with Special Health Care Needs Family Booklet:

This Family Voices guide has family-suggested tips to help encourage healthy eating useful for ALL children. Go to: <http://tinyurl.com/FV-Family-Matters>

Your Guide to Breastfeeding:

Here's a free guide from the U.S. Department of Women's Health, available in English, Spanish, and Chinese.

<http://tinyurl.com/US-Breastfeeding-Guide>

TEACH CHILDREN TO EAT HEALTHY

Make healthy eating a family affair! A trip to the grocery store or farmer's market can be a great learning experience and a great place to find some new foods to try. Helping children learn good eating habits improves their health and well-being—and improves school performance as well. Provide healthy lunch choices and “taste test” opportunities to expose children to new foods. Schools can arrange field trips to local farms to see where food really comes from.



Nutrition Fun and Games

Here's a website with games for kids and ways to get them excited about healthy eating: www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/?page_id=6.



Kids and Gardening

Kids love to dig in the dirt, so why not put that to work, and plant a garden. Helping grow vegetables is a good way to encourage kids to eat them. Here's a website devoted to children and gardening: www.kiddiegardens.com

Healthy School Snacks

Kids come home from school or preschool *hungry*. Here's a website with many healthy, fun, and *tasty* snack options!

www.cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy/healthy_school_snacks.html

RESEARCH IN THE NEWS

Share family meals at least 3 times a week to reduce your family's risk for overweight by 12% and increase the chances by 24% that everyone will eat more healthy foods. Illinois researchers found family meals reduce the risk of “disordered eating,” which includes such unhealthy habits as binging and purging, taking diet pills, and other extreme weight loss measures. Family meals with at least one parent helped increase fruit and vegetable consumption, and cut down on junk food. So... plan on at least 3 meals a week with your family. To read the study, go to:

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/127/6/e1565.full.html>



Another study last year by the National Center for Addition and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University found that teens that share family meals less than 3 times a week are 4 times as likely to use tobacco, 2 times as likely to use alcohol, 2 1/2 times as likely to use marijuana, and 4 times more likely to say they expect to try drugs in the future, as compared to teens who have family meals 5 to 7 times a week. To read the press release and report, go to:

[www.casacolumbia.org/templates/NewsRoom.aspx?articleid=652&zoneid=51](http://casacolumbia.org/templates/NewsRoom.aspx?articleid=652&zoneid=51). CASA

also has a family dinner kit with games and meal planners at:

<http://casafamilyday.org/familyday/tools-you-can-use/family-dinner-kit/>

PARTNERS...



National Association of County & City Health Officials

Does your community have a local health department (LHD)? It is probably a member of NACCHO: the National Association of City and County Health Officials. NACCHO provides resources on community health topics, including chronic disease prevention, immunization, and maternal, child, and adolescent health. They also help LHDs with quality improvement, and prepare for the flu season. NACCHO's collection of Toolboxes created by the public health community provide a way for LHDs to share what works with others. To read more about NACCHO, go to: www.naccho.org.

With an Improving Understanding of MCH grant, Family Voices IMPACT works to develop ways to improve health and wellness for all children and families, and to encourage partnerships between families and professionals for children's good health. Share **Bright Futures: Family Matters** with your networks. Visit www.familyvoices.org & www.brightfuturesforfamilies.org.

THE POWER OF THE COMMUNITY

Have you ever thought about how where you live can affect whether your family enjoys nutritious meals? Does your community have a supermarket or farmers' market within close distance? How about a community garden? These are all community-driven ways to make good nutrition a priority. One Philadelphia non-profit, the **Food Trust** (www.thefoodtrust.org), has developed a program to improve nutrition and general health that is a model for others. Some of their projects might work in your community.



Supermarkets: These large grocery stores often have more choices of healthy foods than the convenience store on the corner. They typically have a large produce section with lots of choices for fruits and vegetables, and more choices for healthy grains (bread, rice, pasta), and a variety of protein-packed possibilities to choose from.



Many areas do not have a conveniently located source for good food. Called "food deserts," this lack of available healthy options is affecting the health of the families who live there, especially low-income families. By working with business leaders and local governments, supermarkets—with their convenient selection of healthy foods—are finding their way into these food deserts.

Research confirms that this improves a community's nutrition.

Farmers' Markets: For many people who don't have their own gardens, these local farmers' markets are the best way to enjoy fresh fruits and vegetables in season. To locate a farmers' market near you, go to: www.localharvest.org.



Community Gardens: Families can share in both the work and the results. Benefits of these community gardens include



eating more fruits and vegetables, engaging in more physical activity, beautifying vacant lots—or rooftops, and encouraging a sense of community that improves social well-being. For more information, check out the American Community Gardening Association at: <http://communitygarden.org>

Convenience Stores: Convenience stores are typically full of less-than-healthy snack items. Adding more fruits and vegetables and other healthy foods helps improve the neighborhood nutrition.



Let's Move! First Lady Michelle Obama has started her own campaign to improve the health and well-being of our country. The campaign focuses on both good nutrition as well as the important of physical activity in promoting healthy weight and health in general. Go to: www.letsmove.gov to read more.