



# Working TOWARD Wellness

LIVE BETTER. LIVE LONGER.

PROVIDED BY HEART HEALTH ACTION WINDSOR-ESSEX  
AND THE WINDSOR-ESSEX COUNTY HEALTH UNIT

## WEIGHING IN ON FAMILY HEALTH

Television, newspapers, Internet, radio talk shows, and employee break times - it seems that almost daily, we hear about the growing problem of overweight and obesity. The number of overweight and obese adults and children in Canada has reached a level that some health experts, including the World Health Organization, are calling "epidemic".

Recent statistics show that almost one in two Canadian adults, and one in three children, are overweight or obese. Many people are questioning how this trend will affect our health, and our health care system, in both the short term and long term. For example, we know that overweight and obese children are more likely to grow up to be overweight or obese adults. In addition, many of these young people are now developing diseases that we traditionally associate with older overweight adults.

It's important to note that obesity is not only a risk factor for chronic diseases like heart disease, diabetes, hypertension and osteoarthritis, increasingly, obesity is considered to be a chronic disease itself. Many parents are concerned about

this trend. They want their children to be healthy yet they don't have answers to questions like:

- *How can I prevent my children from becoming overweight?*
- *If my child(ren) is already overweight, what should I do about it?*
- *How do I deal with my own weight problem, and how does that affect my family?*

The good news is that families can take a variety of steps to prevent and deal with the problems of overweight and obesity. Consider this an opportunity for families to get re-focused on becoming healthier, together.

Parents, grandparents and other adult caregivers are all role models in encouraging children to be more active and to eat better. By leading a physically active lifestyle and having a healthy diet, you not only lead by example, but you can go a long way to improving your own health and well being, and you can have fun doing it!

### TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE!

- |  | T                     | F                     |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Approximately one in three Canadian children are overweight or obese.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. When families are dealing with weight issues, it's important for the whole family to work on eating better and being more active. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. You should take large steps, all at once, when making changes to your eating and physical activity habits.                        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. You can encourage your children to "play" by making simple and inexpensive "active toys" (e.g. skipping ropes) available at home. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5. Children are more likely to eat a food or dish if they have helped prepare it.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6. You should increase "screen time" to encourage children to be more active.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 7. Grandparents can be positive role models to encourage their grandchildren to eat better and be more active.                       | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 8. Eating family meals together at home improves the nutritional quality of a child's diet.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 9. Children need to be involved in physical activities that are structured in order to have any health benefit.                      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 10. Spending more time together as a family can improve the emotional health of a family.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

*see answers on back panel*

### Note the Benefits

There are many benefits for the whole family when they eat better and are more active:

- Feel more energized to cope with daily challenges
- Spend more time together as a family which increases the emotional health of a family
- Promotes a healthy body weight
- Reduces the risk of children developing "adult" chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes
- Improves self esteem and self-confidence of adults and children
- Improves sleep
- Reduces stress
- Improves mental health and helps prevent depression

# Why

## Why focus your family on eating better and being more active?

Families have everything to do with children's health. Children learn and develop most of their lifestyle habits through interactions with their parents, their siblings and other family members, like their grandparents. Although older children and adolescents become more influenced by their peers, the family certainly continues to play an important role in shaping their habits.

Being more active and eating a healthier diet provides huge health benefits for children, parents and grandparents. When healthy

habits are developed during childhood, they are more likely to last into adulthood.

In the short term, children are more likely to:

- Meet all of their nutritional and energy requirements needed to grow and develop at a healthy rate.
- Have a healthy body weight which reduces the risk for developing several health problems during childhood like type 2 diabetes and high cholesterol that were, until recently, seen mostly in adults.
- Have a healthy attitude about, and enjoy eating, a wide variety of foods, as well as feeling good about being active on a daily basis.

In the long term, children who eat healthy and get regular physical activity can significantly reduce their risk of developing chronic diseases like heart disease or cancer later on. Also, they are more likely to have, and keep, a healthy weight throughout their entire lives.

*Continued at end of "How"*

# How

## How can your family get re-focused on

how to eat better and be more active. Remember, healthy living should be a family affair.

### GET STARTED

So, your family is ready to re-focus on eating better and being more active. Congratulations! As you get started, there are a couple of points to keep in mind.

If you are concerned that your child may be overweight, or may be at risk for being overweight, don't panic! Children have time on their side to grow into their current weight slowly as they become taller. As part of your child's health check-ups, ask their doctor to assess and monitor their growth patterns over time.

A major part of the solution in dealing with a child's weight is for the whole family to work on improving their eating habits and physical activity levels, not just the child whose weight you may be concerned about. Also, let your child know that they are loved and appreciated, whatever their weight. This will go a long way in helping them feel good about themselves and developing a healthy attitude.

Another important issue to consider is the importance of involving the whole family when making decisions about

### TAKE STEPS

Taking small steps is important when it comes to making changes in how your family eats and how your family becomes more active. Over time, these small changes will add up and become a part of your lifestyle and routine.

#### Eating Better

- Make healthy eating easier for parents and children by having a variety of healthy food choices available in the home.
- Plan a weekly shopping list that includes a variety of foods for:
  - a) breakfast choices that are quick and easy;
  - b) lunches packed for work and school;
  - c) quick meals to prepare at the end of the work day;
  - and d) healthy snacks. Having a ready supply of nutritious foods at home reduces the competition with less healthy choices that may be available.
- Allow your children to have choices at mealtimes and for snacks, but limit choices to healthy kinds of similar foods e.g. regular or frozen yogurt; celery or carrot sticks; graham crackers or soda crackers; and apples or oranges.

- Try to eat more meals together as a family. This will improve the nutritional quality of your child's meals, as well as your own, and promotes better family communication.
- At mealtimes, set the rule that children must sit at the table, even if they are not hungry, but do not force them to eat.
- Teach your children to cook and prepare meals and snacks. No matter what their age, a child can participate in some part of the preparation. Also, they are more likely to eat food that they helped prepare.
- Grandparents can also get involved by sharing stories and experiences with their grandchildren about the kinds of foods they ate when they were children.

#### Being More Active

When it comes to the whole family being more active, develop some guidelines about the kinds of activities that family members can do in their free time.

- Include restrictions on "screen time" like watching TV, using the computer and playing video games. This will allow more time for being active.
- When deciding on activities, talk to your children to find out what interests them, what they enjoy doing, and then support their participation.
- In your discussions, think outside the

# What

## What if you don't have any kids of your own?

Adults can serve as role models to children in many kinds of situations and relationships. Think about the interactions you have with children on a regular basis. Are you a grandparent? Do you have nieces and nephews? Do you work with children, or volunteer with a children's organization? Do you coach or help out with a sports team in your community?

In many of these situations, there are opportunities for adults to role model healthy habits. For example, do snacks or meals include mostly healthy choices? Is active playing encouraged and supported? Do you participate in these activities? You can make the most of these opportunities by promoting healthy food choices and encouraging children to be more active.

You can also be a role model for your peers (group of people that you work with, or socialize with, on a regular basis). Choose or offer healthy food choices when you are together. Or, go for a group bike ride, walk, or a game of volleyball instead of just sitting around and talking.

## being more active and eating better?

box. In addition to structured activities like basketball leagues and dance classes, encourage your children to "play" by reinforcing unstructured activities like jumping rope, playing catch, riding a bike, or simply using their imagination to make up games that don't require any equipment.

- One way to encourage "play" is by making simple and inexpensive "active toys" available at home. For example, frisbees, balls, hula hoops, and skipping ropes can be used for a variety of activities and games. These items are also very portable and can be taken on family outings and vacations.
- Think about other ways of making family outings more active. For example, instead of just going out for dinner, play a game of mini-golf or organize a simple treasure hunt before heading off to the restaurant.
- Grandparents can play a key role and get involved by teaching children the games played when they were younger.

on a regular basis. It's also important not to be too restrictive with sweets and fast foods. Small amounts once in a while are OK. And, don't forget to have fun in trying new activities and new foods.



*Continued from "Why"*

Parents' habits have a profound influence on their children because parents are the most important role models in their lives. Often, children develop many of the same habits of one, or both, of their parents, whether they are healthy habits or not. Grandparents also have a key role to play in influencing their grandchildren's habits and attitudes.

If parents make the commitment to work on becoming healthier themselves, they, as well as their children, will reap the benefits. For many parents, once they understand how much their habits affect their children, they can become motivated to improve their own eating and physical activity habits. This becomes a win-win situation for children and parents who become healthier and have a more enjoyable life in general.

## STICK WITH IT AND HAVE FUN!

Remember, showing your children how much you enjoy being active and eating nutritious foods goes a long way for them to continue having the same healthy habits. Support and encourage each other

# Go for it!

## RESOURCES AND WEBSITES

Contact the Health Unit for information and programs on eating well, being active, and healthy weights for children.

How to Get Your Kid to Eat...but not too much. (book). Ellyn Satter. 1987.

Canadian Health Network  
[www.canadian-health-network.ca](http://www.canadian-health-network.ca)  
Search site for "children weight"

Healthy Eating and Physical Activity During the Toddler and Preschool Years  
[www.dietitians.ca/healthystart/](http://www.dietitians.ca/healthystart/)

Is My Child Growing Well?  
[www.caringforkids.cps.ca/eating/Growth.htm](http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/eating/Growth.htm)

Eat Well, Play Well at Home  
[www.dietitians.ca/english/frames.html](http://www.dietitians.ca/english/frames.html)

Nutrition for Toddlers to Teens  
[www.eparentingnetwork.ca](http://www.eparentingnetwork.ca)

Canada's Physical Activity Guides for Children and Youth  
[www.paguide.com](http://www.paguide.com)

Fit 4 Life for Kids  
[www.bam.gov/fit4life/index.htm](http://www.bam.gov/fit4life/index.htm)

Dole 5 A Day  
[www.dole5aday.com](http://www.dole5aday.com)  
Promotes eating more vegetables for the whole family. Includes a website just for kids.

Family Education Network  
[www.familyeducation.com](http://www.familyeducation.com)  
Search site for "guidelines for family TV viewing".

Nutrition for Kids  
[www.nutritionforkids.com](http://www.nutritionforkids.com)

[www.wehealthunit.org](http://www.wehealthunit.org) and at  
[www.windsor-heart-health.com](http://www.windsor-heart-health.com)

# CLIP & KEEP THIS INFO!

## TIPS

### on How Your Family Can Eat Better and Be More Active

- Plan ahead by thinking about dinner ideas in advance. To save time, mix and match home-prepared foods with convenience foods like “chicken-to-go” and bagged salads.
- Get organized for breakfast the night before (e.g. get out cereal boxes, organize dishes and cutlery, etc.).
- Instead of super-sizing at fast food restaurants, choose smaller portions and add healthy items like low-fat chocolate milk or small servings of 100% fruit juice, or a side salad with low-fat dressing.
- Stock up on healthy snack and meal items for packing lunches for school and work, including a variety of fresh fruit; low-fat yogurt; whole grain breads (mini pitas, tortilla wraps, buns, etc.); dried fruit mixes, etc.
- Pick a new activity and try it together as a family.
- Give “active gifts” like a ball, a road hockey stick or a gift certificate to a local recreation centre.
- Use active transportation, like walking and bicycling, as often as possible. This could include bicycling to a friend's house or walking to the corner store for some milk.
- Cut back on “screen time” by setting guidelines like one hour per day of computer time or a maximum of four “TV” shows per week.

## Pass it on!

Please feel free to copy any articles in this brochure as long as you acknowledge the source.

# Make it happen at your workplace!

Here are some suggestions to encourage and support being more active and eating better in your workplace, as well as at home.

- Limit the amount of “liquid calories” available such as soft drinks, fruit drinks and other sweetened beverages. Encourage more water, milk and small servings of 100% fruit juice as beverages of choice.
- Include more vegetables and fruit in packed lunches and snacks.
- Start a walking club or buddy-up with a friend and go for walks before, during or after work.
- Walk or bike to work, or if you drive, park further away.
- Visit a website with a child where you can both learn about healthy eating in a fun and interactive way (e.g. [www.dole5aday.com](http://www.dole5aday.com)).
- Promote community events that encourage employees and their families to become more active.
- Investigate having “healthy family days” that are organized to feature a variety of activities that can involve the employee's whole family (e.g. frisbee tournament, skipping rope events, soccer, etc.). Feature healthy meal or snack choices at these events.
- Promote ways that parents and children can reduce the amount of leisure time spent on “screens” (TV, computer, video games) so that they can become more active and be less influenced by food advertising for unhealthy food choices.

*“Bad habits are like a comfortable bed, easy to get into, but hard to get out of.”*

Anonymous

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Answers (from front page): 1-T • 2-T • 3-F • 4-T • 5-T • 6-F • 7-T • 8-T • 9-F • 10-T

For more information about the Workplace Health Promotion Program, contact the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit at 258-2146 x 3100



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[www.wehealthunit.org](http://www.wehealthunit.org) and at [www.windsor-heart-health.com](http://www.windsor-heart-health.com)