



## Q. Why is it important that my child eat fruits and vegetables?

A. Fruits and vegetables contain a variety of vitamins and minerals that aid in growth and development and help prevent disease. They're also a good source of fiber, which helps to keep our digestive system healthy. And since fruit and vegetables are naturally low in calories, they help us maintain a healthy weight.

Research shows that people who eat a variety of fruits and vegetables have lower rates of chronic diseases such as adult-onset diabetes, some types of cancer, and high blood pressure.

## Q. How can I get my child to eat fruits and vegetables?

A. If you are like most parents, you may be concerned that your child isn't eating enough fruits and vegetables. Some changes that you can make to get your child to try new foods, including fruits and vegetables, include:

- Serve a colorful plate—when your plate is filled with a variety of fruits and vegetables, it should resemble a rainbow.
- Pick one new fruit or vegetable for your family to sample each time you visit the store. It can be an adventure that the family all samples together.
- Cut up fruits and vegetables (raw vegetables, peeled oranges, or seedless grapes) and leave them on the counter for snack time or put pre-made “grab and go snacks” in small plastic bags in your refrigerator.
- Add a dipping sauce or topping to vegetables (raw baby carrots with ranch dressing or steamed broccoli sprinkled with shredded cheese).
- Add fruits and vegetables to favorite foods—top a pizza or stuff a quesadilla with vegetables. Try a milk shake or smoothie with frozen strawberries or bananas.
- Involve your child in the kitchen. Kids love to cook and are usually more than willing to try something that they helped to prepare.
- Be patient. Trying new foods can be intimidating and it can take several tries for a child to agree to put the food on their plate. Allow them to see the new fruit or vegetable cooked and served in a variety of ways, on separate occasions.
- Try the one-bite rule. Encourage your child to have a bite of a food so they can decide if they want to eat it. Remember, taste buds change over time, so tasting is important as food preferences develop.
- Be a role model. If your child sees you enjoying fruits and vegetables and trying new foods regularly, he or she will be more apt to try too.

## Q. Fresh fruits and vegetables can be expensive. How can I fit them into my budget?

A. There are many ways to fit fruits and vegetables into your daily diet without exceeding your grocery budget. Try the following ideas:

- Buy fresh fruits and vegetables that are in season. They will be less expensive and are usually the best tasting.
- Visit your local farmers' market. Eating locally grown produce saves money and also supports the local economy.
- Experiment with frozen and canned produce. While fresh is usually recommended, frozen and canned products are more likely to be on sale at your local store, and won't spoil before you get to eat them.

# Questions & Answers

## Q. Why should I limit my child's total screen time?

A. Screen time is defined as time spent watching TV, playing video games, and surfing the Internet. This is time that can be better spent being physically active.

## Q. Are there other reasons why I should specifically limit watching TV?

A. Excessive television time has a negative impact on health, educational achievement, and time spent with family or participating in physical activities. Also, studies have found a strong relationship between watching food advertisements and choosing foods low in nutritional value. Thus additional television watching tends to increase children's consumption of junk food, such as soda and sugary snacks.

Health experts recommend that children be limited to a maximum of two hours of TV a day. In fact, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children under the age of two not watch any TV.

## Q. How do I get my child away from the TV, video games, and computer?

A. Limiting your child's screen time may seem like a daunting task. But there are several changes you can make to decrease your family's screen time:

- Replace a TV-night with a family fun activity—try walking together, dancing, or playing games like hopscotch or catch.
- Set viewing limits—enforce the two-hour time limit.
- Turn off the video games and swap for active play and other activities.
- Don't let your child have a TV in his or her bedroom. Even better—have a “no TV in the bedroom” rule for all family members.

Remember, you are your child's best role model—getting yourself moving and off the couch is an important first step to increase your family's daily activity.

## Q. What is the difference between physical activity, exercise, and fitness?

A. Being physically active is different from exercise or fitness. Fitness, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is a set of criteria that people have or achieve that relates to the ability to perform physical activity. Exercise is a structured and/or organized activity.

Physical activity is any movement—so there are endless opportunities to get your child moving. Children don't need to participate in regimented exercise to improve their health.

## Q. My child won't join a sports team. What can I do to increase his/her physical activity?

A. When children and adolescents do not like to participate in organized sports, oftentimes it is because they don't have the skill and confidence. Instead, encourage non-competitive physical activities, such as walking, martial arts, dancing, jumping rope, skateboarding, cycling, or swimming, that your child can enjoy for a lifetime. Here are some ideas to help get you started:

- Find out about community after-school programs that get kids moving—this will help increase their daily activity.
- Work with your school to make sure that there are opportunities for your child to be physically active through recess, before- and/or after-school programs, and physical education class.
- Be physically active with your child. Research indicates that children of all ages like to be physically active with their parents. Remember, you are your child's best role model.
- Plan physical activities like walking, hiking, in-line skating, sledding, and playing games like tag, that the whole family can enjoy.
- If possible, walk to and from school.

