

## EAT BETTER – LIVE BETTER

If changing eating habits were easy, many more people would be fit and healthy. One key to making lasting improvements is to make changes in stages. Start with something simple and stick to it for a week. After your family has mastered one change, add another.

### Some Ideas to Get You Started

- Substitute water for one sugary drink each day.
- Eat 1 to 2 more fruits or vegetables each day.
- Plan a healthy snack for each day of the week.
- Switch to a low-fat version of a favorite food.
- Eat breakfast.
- Plan 3 meals and 2 snacks every day.
- Plan a home-cooked meal, which usually has fewer calories, more reasonable portions, and costs less than typical meals eaten at restaurants.

### Set the Example

Parents play a big role in guiding their children's eating habits through the examples they set, the foods they make available in the home, and the mealtime experiences they create for their families. Offer healthy snacks such as fruit, low-fat cottage cheese or yogurt, frozen juice bars, applesauce, celery or apples and peanut butter, raw vegetables, graham crackers, fig bars or whole wheat crackers, and low-fat cheese. Large portions mean too many calories. A snack for a typical adult may be a container of yogurt, but for a preschooler, 2 or 3 tablespoons of yogurt is about right.

### Make Eating an Enjoyable Activity for the Whole Family

Family meals can be a time to monitor what children are eating and reconnect with each other. Involve children in food preparation and clean-up. Teens who eat meals with their families 6-7 times a week are about half as likely to abuse alcohol or drugs. Sit down with children when they eat. The idea is to build healthy life-long eating habits:

- Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables – five servings a day for children ages 2 to 6 and seven to nine servings a day for older children.
- Beware of sweetened drinks – sodas and sports drinks are high in calories, and too much juice can quickly add many calories to a child's diet.
- Choose food sensibly when eating out.

### Healthy Food Tips When Eating Out

- Eat the same portion size you would at home. Ask if you don't know what is in a dish or the serving size.
- Ask for sauces, gravy, and dressings on the side – or avoid them altogether.
- Order foods that are not breaded or fried.
- Order fruit for an appetizer or dessert.
- Ask for substitutions: A vegetable instead of fries or for the high-fat food to be left off the plate.
- Ask for low-calorie versions of food. Vinegar and oil or a squeeze of lemon is better than high-fat dressings or sauces.

### Did You Know?

Americans eat an average of 4.2 commercially prepared meals each week. Processed foods are likely to be higher in calories, fat, and salt and lower in fiber than natural meals prepared at home.