



Promoting Lifelong Wellness at Home

Did you know that research shows kids who eat nutritious foods and get regular physical activity perform better academically, are better able to focus, and feel better about themselves than kids who are sedentary and poorly nourished? Of course, this is common sense, but unfortunately we live in an environment that offers greater access to high calorie foods and sedentary activities than ever before in human history. Staying in energy balance now takes knowledge, skill and conscious effort.

Energy balance is balancing what we eat with the activities we do to help us feel and perform well and keep our bodies and minds in shape.

It is never too early to reinforce healthy habits at home. Some cost-free and easy to implement tips include:

- Try **active transport** – make time to walk or bike to school, start a walking school bus with a group of friends and parents, or walk or bike to friends’ houses instead of drive.
- Aim for **60 minutes of physical activity** most days of the week. This does not have to be at one time. Spreading activity throughout the day is as beneficial as doing it all at once.
- Encourage kids to get some physical activity before starting their homework, or to break up homework. **Physical activity breaks** increase cognitive function for adults and kids. If you have a desk job, get up and move around at work and notice how your own concentration improves.
- **Substitute high calorie drinks** with no nutritional value (such as soda) with water or low-fat milk, and save drinking sodas for special occasions.
- Support the concept of **energy balance** at home. Keep in mind that energy balance happens over long periods of time. We don’t consume and expend the exact same number of calories each day, so aim for long-term balance.
- Ask your doctor or school nurse if you need **resources** to support your family’s health.