**Childhood Obesity Prevention Strategies for Parents and Caregivers**

- Be good role models. Show your children how important it is for all family members to make healthy food choices.
- Provide your children with healthy food choices. Provide snacks that are low in fat, sodium, and refined sugar and are high in fiber, vitamins, and minerals.
- Encourage young children to develop good eating habits and preferences for healthful foods because eating behaviors that develop during childhood tend to track into adulthood.
- Do not prohibit your children from eating unhealthy foods. The key is moderation. Limit fast food.
- Watch your children's portion sizes and make sure the diet is consistent with the recommendations of the food guide pyramid.
- Consult your child's pediatrician or nurse to find out how much food your child should be eating if you are not sure what portion sizes are appropriate for your child, or consult the resource books listed below.
- Limit television viewing. Research suggests that increased television viewing is related to the development and maintenance of obesity. This is not surprising given the number of advertisements for unhealthy foods targeted at child consumers, the sedentary nature of watching TV, and the fact that most people eat while viewing TV.
- Encourage your children to be active, but ensure appropriate safety precautions. For example, make sure your children wear protective gear including a helmet when they ride a bike or roller blade.
- Work with community groups to develop safe walk-to-school programs if it is unsafe for your children to walk to school.
- Learn about supervised activities offered by after-school programs at schools and community centers if you live in a neighborhood that is unsafe for children to play in the street or on the playgrounds.
- Involve your children in food purchasing by taking your children food shopping and allowing them to help select healthy foods. Also, involve your in the food preparation process such as washing vegetables and pouring and stirring ingredients.
- Give your children specific praise for making healthy food choices. For example, "I like how you ate all of your spinach! It will make you very healthy and strong."
- Remember that food preferences develop over repeated exposure and time. Try to present new foods in small quantities and encourage your children to just take a bite at first. Over time, you can increase the portion size of the new food.
- Make sure your children try to eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables each day, such as 100% fruit and vegetable juices and raw, cooked, canned, or dried fruits and vegetables. Easy accessibility to fruits and vegetables is important. Have fresh fruits and vegetables such as grapes and baby carrots washed and placed in a prominent location in the refrigerator.
- Be an advocate for your children at school. Does your school have a vending machine that allows children to purchase soda and candy at school? If so, speak with the principal and other administrators and the parent-teacher organization about the possibility of having the vending machine disperse water, 100% fruit or vegetable juice, milk, and healthier snacks (such as granola bars, boxes of raisins, graham crackers, and pretzels). This alternative enables the school to earn money, but not at the expense of its students' health.
- Suggest fresh fruits and vegetables and low-fat and skim milk be served in the cafeteria if it does not do so. Speak with the principal, food service administrators, and the parent-teacher organization.
- Discuss alternatives with fundraising organizers if your school engages in fundraising activities that encourage children to eat candy, chips, and other foods that contribute to childhood overweight and obesity. Suggest a fresh fruit sale.

**Resource**