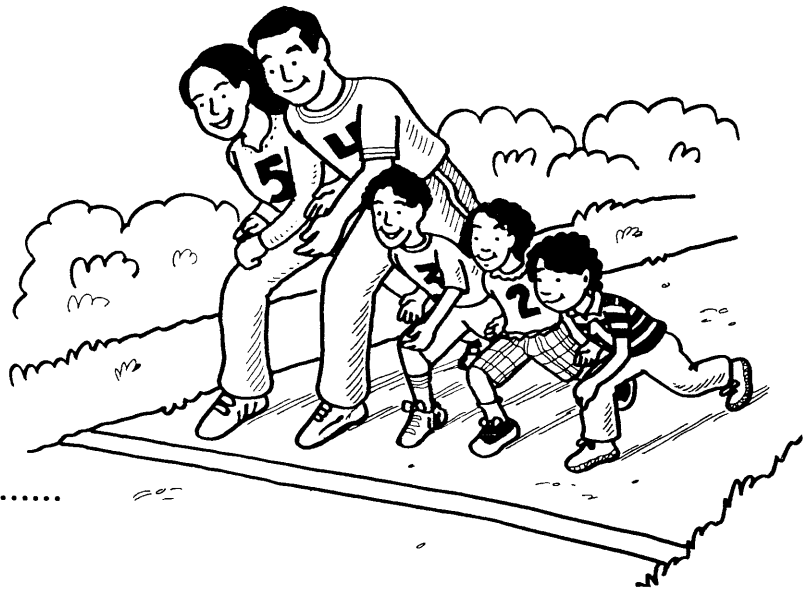




# HEALTHY STEPS

Every journey begins with a single step, and that includes your family's journey to a healthier lifestyle. Whether your family is just getting started or is looking to add more good habits, you can follow these steps on the road to becoming a healthier family.



## STEP 1: FIND A STARTING POINT

The best way to start is by learning where you stand now. One quick and easy idea is to keep food and fitness journals for a week. Label seven index cards with the days of the week for every person in your family. On the front of each day's card, each person writes everything she eats that day. On the back, she records her physical activity (played tag at recess, used the stairs instead of the elevator at work). At the end of the week, read the cards out loud to each other. Together, find habits to change. *Examples:* "Let's have fat-free milk with breakfast every morning." "Let's walk to school once a week."

## STEP 2: CHANGE ONE THING AT A TIME

Focus on changing a single habit at a time. For instance, you might decide to switch your children's after-school snack from cookies to cheese and fresh fruit. Or turn your family's weekly movie night into a weekly activity night, and go skating or play backyard games. Continue the new habit for a month, and then decide on a new one to add.

## STEP 3: READ FOOD LABELS

Put the information on food labels to work for you. Check the sodium, fat, and fiber content, and choose foods that are lower in sodium and fat and



higher in fiber. When you look at calories, don't forget to consider the number of servings. For instance, a bag of crackers that has 70 calories per serving and contains 3 servings has 210 calories in all. *Idea:* Encourage your whole family to use the "five-finger rule" when reading a food label. Each time you find a chemical or an ingredient you don't recognize, hold up a finger. If five fingers go up, look for a healthier alternative.

## STEP 4: TRY NEW FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Break out of unhealthy eating habits by finding interesting fruits and vegetables to try.

For example, you might have honeydew melon as a snack or microwave broccoli for a side dish at dinner.

Make it a goal to try a new item each week. If you need recipe ideas, check at the grocery store. Many have racks filled with free recipe cards for items they carry. *Tip:* Offer only one new food at a time. Too many new choices at once can be overwhelming.



*continued*

## Nutrition Nuggets

**STEP 5:**

**FIX "FAST FOOD" AT HOME**

Don't let busy lives and hectic schedules knock your healthy-eating plan off track. Instead of heading for the drive-through, plan ahead. On the weekends, cook double batches of nutritious soup, stew, or chili. Freeze leftovers so you'll have quick, healthy dinners on days when there's no time to cook. When you or your child packs lunches, make two sandwiches instead of one. Then he can eat the extra sandwich after school or for tomorrow's lunch.

**STEP 6:**

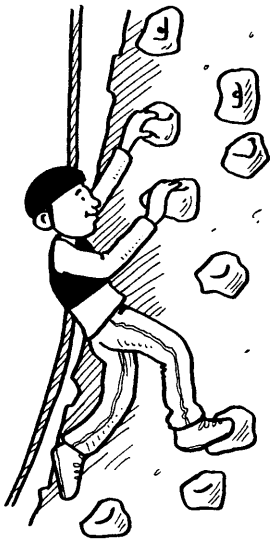
**DRINK MORE WATER**

Did you know that when your child first begins to feel thirsty, she's already slightly dehydrated? Give every family member a water bottle to take to games and practices, and remind them to drink water before, during, and after exercise. Also, keep a pitcher of water in the refrigerator, and encourage your youngsters to reach for it at snack time and mealtime. *Tip:* Try not to keep sugary drinks like sodas, fruit drinks, and sports drinks in the house.

**STEP 7:**

**CHOOSE A FITNESS LEADER**

Make it easier to stay motivated by sharing the responsibility. Each week, name one person to pick a daily activity for your family to do together. The fitness leader might choose an after-dinner walk on Monday, touch football on Tuesday, and a Frisbee game on Wednesday. Choosing a different person each week gives everyone the opportunity to pick favorite activities. Plus, it puts the whole family "in charge" of meeting fitness goals.



**STEP 8:  
TAKE ACTIVE  
FIELD TRIPS**

Take a field trip in your town that will let you play and get fit. Make a list of rock-climbing walls, mini-golf courses, and bowling alleys to try. Remember, physical activity is anything that keeps you moving. You might pick berries at a farm, tour a nearby cave, or combine a brisk walk with a visit to a petting zoo. Or use a change of scenery to add new life to old standbys. Move favorite games such as badminton or tag from



the backyard to a park or playground. To get new ideas, check your library for books of games (try *Mom's Handy Book of Backyard Games* by Pete Cava).

**STEP 9:**

**MAKE CHOOSING  
HEALTHY SNACKS EASY**

Keep healthy snacks handy by stocking up on nutritious foods. Create a snack basket on the counter and fill it with individual servings of trail mix, whole-grain cereal, and fresh fruit. Set aside a crisper drawer in the fridge as a "snack center" for nonfat yogurt, carrot and celery sticks, and string cheese. For more healthy snack ideas, Google "healthy snacks for kids," or look for books like *Healthy Treats and Super Snacks for Kids* by Penny Warner.



**STEP 10:**

**WIND DOWN AT NIGHT**

Good sleep habits can go a long way toward making your family healthier. People who get enough sleep have less stress and more energy, and they eat less. Try to go to bed at the same time each night and get up at the same time in the morning—even on weekends. A consistent routine will help you fall asleep faster. You might relax with a calming activity like listening to soft music or reading.

*Editor's Note:* Nutrition Nuggets is reviewed by a registered dietitian. Consult a physician before beginning any major change in diet or exercise.

## Nutrition Nuggets

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