

## 6 Ways to Do Your Part for a Healthy School Environment

### 1. Be an active role model ~ set a great example for kids.

- ✓ **Start a morning walking club:** Walking around the school can be a fun path to fitness for kids, families, and staff - especially with some peppy background music.
- ✓ **Take a fitness break in the classroom:** Smart teachers know that just 5 to 10 minutes of physical activity can improve fitness levels and academic performance.

### 2. Be smart eater ~ show kids how to enjoy tasty brain food.

- ✓ **Walk the talk of good nutrition:** Eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains – in front of the kids, so they can see how much eating right means to you.
- ✓ **Switch to smart snacks:** Bring smart snacks for yourself; encourage kids to bring smart snacks from home; replace sugary items with nuts, fruit, or string cheese.

### 3. Drink with your health in mind ~ refresh yourself well.

- ✓ **Steer clear of empty calorie, highly sweetened beverages:** Smart brains and fit bodies do best with plenty of cold water – plain and perfectly refreshing.
- ✓ **For intelligent nutrition, drink low-fat milk or 100% fruit juice:** Your body will thank you for daily dose of calcium, vitamin C, and other nutrients.

### 4. Support an effective Local Wellness Policy.

- ✓ **By Federal mandate, all schools must have a Local Wellness Policy on the first day of school in 2006-07:** Read your school's policy carefully!
- ✓ **Approving a policy is just the first, small step:** The key to healthy kids and healthy schools is to effectively implement a strong policy – based on local needs.

### 5. Become a leader on your School Health Council.

- ✓ **The requirement for School Health Councils begins in 11/06:** Every Mississippi school must establish a group to work on health and wellness issues.
- ✓ **Participate rather than pointing fingers:** School health councils are the ideal place to plan, and implement improvements – from the cafeteria to the classroom.

### 6. Check out the Office of Healthy Schools website.

- ✓ **Need resources, support or technical assistance?** You don't have to reinvent any wheels or go it alone – there is help for all aspects of school health here.
- ✓ **Need funding for school-based physical activity or nutrition goals?** This website offer applications for a variety of grant opportunities, like those from The Bower Foundation and the Mississippi Team Nutrition Program.

[www.healthyschoolsms.org](http://www.healthyschoolsms.org)



## 6 Simple Steps to a Healthy Weight for Kids

### 1. Be active by playing together inside and outside.

For a healthy weight, kids and adults need 30 to 60 minutes of daily physical activity.

Play with your kids every day – fun for them, fun for you too!

- ✓ **Play inside:** Turn off the TV and play an old-fashioned game of hide-and-seek. Clear a space for wiggling, dancing, and playing with soft-foam balls or squishy toys.
- ✓ **Play outside:** The options for outdoor play are unlimited: bikes, trikes, scooters, balls, kites, Frisbees, jump ropes, squirt guns, hula-hoops, hopscotch, and tag.

### 2. Make family meals a special time to eat together.

Eating more meals together can make a big difference in your family's health, happiness, and finances. Dinners at home are easier (and cheaper) than you think!

- ✓ **Plan a weekly menu:** Make it simple or make it detailed – the key is to have a plan. Involve the whole family; let each person have a night to pick their favorite dishes.
- ✓ **Cook once, eat twice:** Cut down on prep time. Cook and freeze key ingredients, like ground beef for tacos and spaghetti sauce, or main dishes, like lasagna and casseroles.

### 3. Save fast food for a once or twice a week treat.

Fast food is often loaded with calories, fat, and sugar. Whether you drive-thru or go inside, here are some smart tips to help you eat better in the fast food lane.

- ✓ **Share a super size:** There's a way to make mega portions work for you: share them! By sharing a large order of fries, you eat fewer calories, less fat, and save money too.
- ✓ **Choose nutrient-rich options:** Many national chains now offer tasty, fun choices in kids' meals – like flavored milk instead of pop and mandarin oranges instead of fries.

### 4. Enjoy tasty fruit and veggie snacks together.

Serve a rainbow of produce every day – at least 5 juicy, crunchy, crispy, tasty fruits and vegetables. Fresh, frozen, dried, canned, and juice – they all count for 5 A Day!

- ✓ **Enjoy green fruits and veggies:** For snacks or dinner, green comes in dozens of delicious flavors – like sliced kiwi fruit or broccoli trees with light Ranch dip.
- ✓ **Enjoy red fruits and veggies:** Red is a tasty color for produce – any time of day! Try frozen berries, watermelon, or canned tomato sauce on pasta, pizza, or tacos.

### 5. Drink milk with meals and drink water with snacks.

Dairy products can help kids (and adults) maintain a healthy weight, build strong bodies, and lower blood pressure. Water is always refreshing – and calorie-free.

- ✓ **Serve low-fat milk with meals:** The best way to get your kids to drink milk is to drink milk yourself with every meal. Aim for a total of 16 to 24 ounces per day.
- ✓ **Steer clear of sugary drinks:** For beautiful teeth and strong bodies, wise parents limit soft drinks, fruit punch, fruit drinks, sweet tea, and other high-sugar drinks.

### 6. Take the TV out of the bedroom and read together.

Pediatricians recommend no TV for children under three years, no more than two hours of total screen time a day for older kids, and no TVs in children's rooms.

- ✓ **Improve your child's school performance:** Children who have less time screen time (TV, computers, and video games) tend to read more and do better in their classes.
- ✓ **Improve your child's sleeping habits:** There are many benefits to taking the TV out of a child's bedroom: calmer bedtime routines, more bedtime stories, and better sleep.

