

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

There are a number of resources available online for parents who would like additional information on how to foster healthy habits in your children. Parents may find the following Web resources beneficial:

U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention/National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Division of Adolescent and School Health  
<http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth>

National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE)  
<http://www.aahperd.org/naspe/>

President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports (PCPFS)  
<http://www.fitness.gov>

Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids  
<http://www.tobaccofreekids.org>

National Sleep Foundation  
<http://www.sleepfoundation.org>

Tips For Parents To Help Children Develop a Healthy Lifestyle  
[http://www.stlouischildrens.org/articles/kids\\_parents.asp?ID=3890](http://www.stlouischildrens.org/articles/kids_parents.asp?ID=3890)

American Heart Association  
<http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=4575>

## PARENTS SHOULD SERVE AS ROLE MODELS

Parental attitude toward exercise and a healthy diet says a lot to their children as to the importance they place on physical activity and a healthy lifestyle. Parents who exercise regularly and ensure a healthy diet for their family help foster the same commitment in their children.

Your local newspaper can serve as a good starting point for helping children understand the importance of daily exercise and a healthy diet. Look through the various sections of the newspaper for stories about the prevention and cure of illnesses and prevention of accidents. Point out story details that deal with actions you and your children can take to prevent illness and injury.

There are often stories in the newspaper about people whose jobs center around the health and safety of the community. Look for these individuals and note the government agencies and other organizations that help when disasters strike. Ask your child why people choose these jobs and what training and character traits are required to do these jobs well.

Keeping physically fit is important to long-term health. Have your children find people in the newspaper who keep active and have fun doing it. Talk with your child about the types of activities and sports they enjoy playing.

### Parents can help their children lead an active life by:

- providing access to outdoor/indoor physical activities;
- serving as a role model and participating in physical activities themselves or with their children;
- planning family activities that include physical activity
- encouraging children to participate in physical activities; and
- limiting television watching, computer games and other physically inactive forms of play.



## MAKING the GRADE

Encouraging Healthy, Active Children



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# MAKING the GRADE

SPRING 2004



## ENCOURAGING HEALTHY, ACTIVE CHILDREN

Having healthy, active children are top goals for parents. But what are the best approaches to encouraging healthy choices for children and teenagers? How much exercise is enough? How do you get children to eat their vegetables? How can schools and parents work in partnership to help encourage healthy habits in young people? One of the State Board of Education's five strategic priorities is Healthy Students in Safe, Orderly and Caring Schools, signaling Board members' strong interest in encouraging North Carolina children to adopt healthful habits right from the start. This tabloid includes a variety of information to help you and your family adopt and strengthen healthful habits.

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY = PHYSICAL WELL-BEING



Do you believe that physical activity is essential to your child's physical and mental well being? If you do, you're not alone according to an opinion survey released by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE), which found that nearly 95 percent of all parents believe that daily physical activity helps children do better academically and is important to their physical health.



The survey found that over 75 percent of parents think more physical education in school could help control or prevent childhood obesity. Over 95 percent of parents think physical education should be part of a school curriculum for all K-12 students; and over half believe physical education is as important as math, science and English.



Going hand-in-hand with increased physical activity at school is the need for more education on the benefits of healthy habits. The NASPE survey found that most parents would even be willing to pay higher taxes if it meant that their children would receive more physical education and nutrition classes.

## MEDICAL CHECKUPS ARE IMPORTANT FOR CHILDREN OF ALL AGES

It's important for children of all ages to receive regular health checkups. Even when your child looks well, he or she may have health problems that are not easy to detect and these problems can impact your child's physical well-being. For example, hearing and vision problems, which can be hard to detect in young children, can affect your child's talking and learning abilities. Early detection and treatment may keep the problems from getting worse.



It is recommended that children between the ages of two and six receive annual medical checkups with children between the ages of seven and 20 going every other year. However, if you suspect a problem, your child should be checked more often. If your child is younger than two years, check with your family physician regarding when to bring in your child.

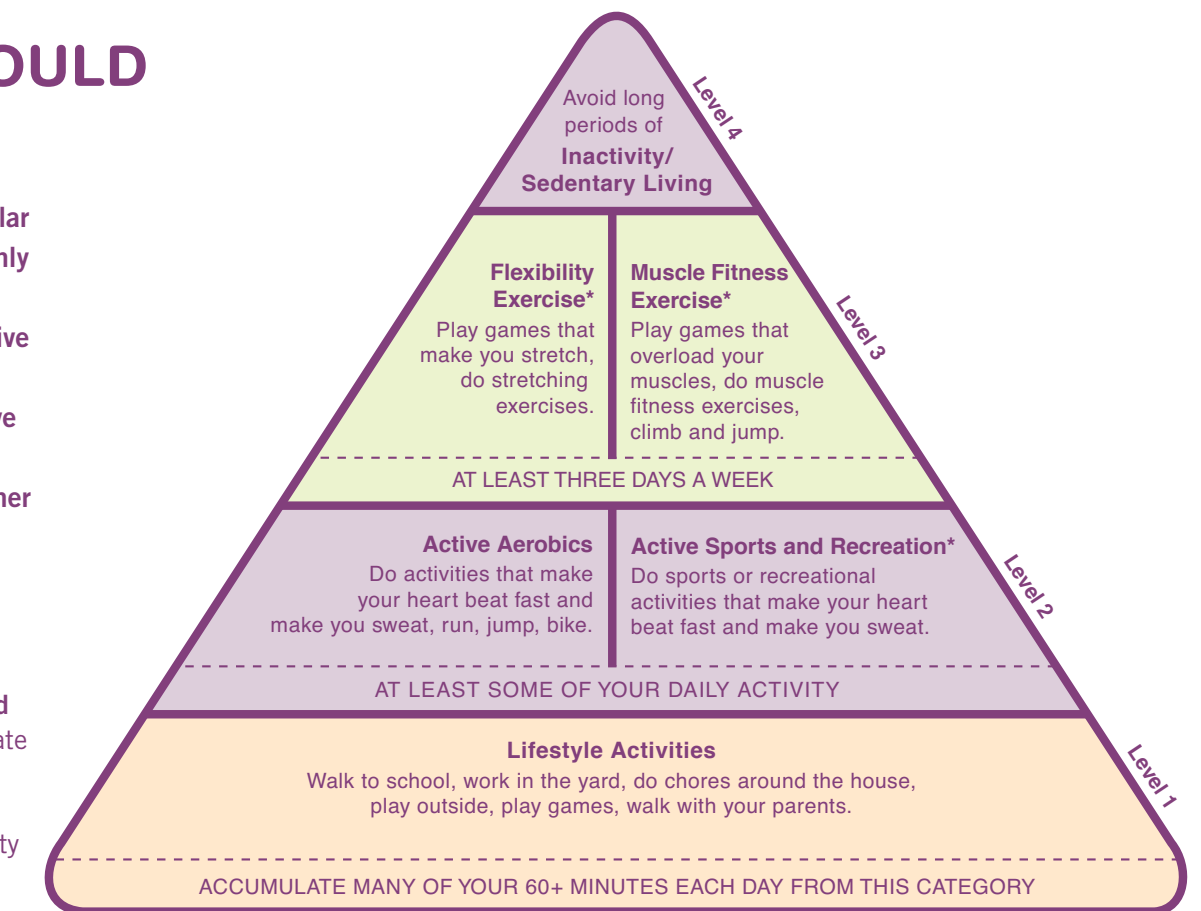
## HOW MUCH EXERCISE SHOULD MY CHILD BE GETTING?

Extensive research has documented the health benefits of regular physical activity. Chronic diseases, once thought to be found only in adults, are becoming more and more common in children. Research also indicates that adults tend to become more inactive as they get older. Inactivity among children has been linked to sedentary living among adults, which is why promoting an active lifestyle among children has become an important goal of the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) as well as other groups interested in the health and well-being of all citizens.

Children and adolescents benefit from physical activity in many ways. But how much exercise should your child be getting? According to the Council for Physical Education for Children, **60 minutes is the minimum amount of daily activity recommended for children.** To attain optimal benefits, children need to accumulate more than 60 minutes per day, preferably in bouts of 15 minutes or more. Physical activity should include some moderate activity such as brisk walking and some vigorous activity greater in intensity than brisk walking.

One of the best ways to ensure that your children are participating in a variety of age-appropriate physical activities designed to "achieve optimal health, wellness, fitness and performance benefits," is by consulting the **Physical Activity Pyramid**. The concept for the pyramid has been adapted from the Food Guide Pyramid and is used to describe appropriate amounts of activity needed to achieve specific physical benefits.

Children should select from all of the first three levels of activities in the pyramid each week; however, it is recommended that children, particularly younger ones (ages 5-9) will want to accumulate a lot of their activities from the base. Older children (10-12) will typically do more sports related activities with adolescents taking on more vigorous activities such as running/jogging and sports. It is important that all children, regardless of age, accumulate some vigorous physical activity during the week. Children should also include activity that overloads the muscle in a way that promotes muscle fitness and



\*Less emphasis on these areas for children ages 5-9

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PYRAMID

flexibility. Activities such as climbing, jumping, tumbling and resistance activities for older children help work the muscles.

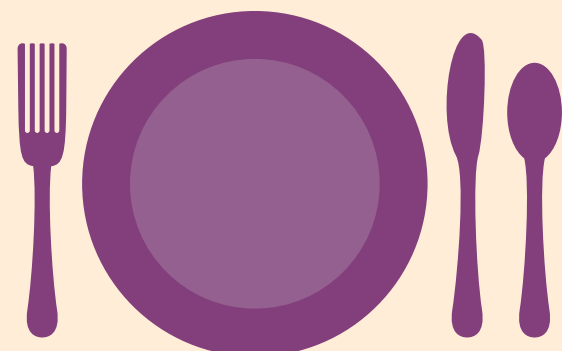
Although most children, if given the time to play and be active, will accumulate the appropriate amounts of physical activities, parents may want to help their children learn how to self-monitor to ensure they are getting the appropriate amount of exercise. Once children know what it takes to reach their daily activity level, exercise will become second nature to them. Parents may want to use pedometers, activity logs, calendars or computer software to help their children keep track of their physical activities.

## A HEALTHY DIET IS ESSENTIAL TO HEALTHY CHILDREN

Healthy eating habits begin at home. With the increased number of children who are overweight and suffer from health conditions, nutrition education has taken on even greater importance. Parents are their children's first and best teachers in this area, and schools depend on their support in helping children develop healthy eating and fitness habits.

Helping your child understand the importance of healthy eating habits involves more than just telling them what they should eat. Children need opportunities to make sound dietary decisions in addition to access to a variety of nutritious foods and beverages that promote a healthy lifestyle. It's hard to practice healthy choices if the only foods in the home are high in fat or sugar and contribute little nutritional value.

Parents also can help their children make healthful food choices by reviewing the school lunch menu with them. Talk with your child about healthful choices and encourage them to think about the foods they will choose before they get to the cafeteria. Schools in North Carolina are required to offer wholesome, healthful meals that are in



keeping with the US Dietary Guidelines for Americans that suggest that we choose foods low in fat, sugar and salt and choose more fruits, vegetables and whole grain foods.

There are a number of activities that you can do with your child to help them start making healthy food choices. Many parents struggle with getting their children to eat vegetables or try new foods. Why not involve your child in planning the dinner menu? By helping decide what to eat, children have ownership in what will be served. This may also encourage them to try different foods.

Parents may want to have their children look through the food section of the newspaper for possible recipe ideas. Discuss with your child the item's nutritional content and suggest possible ingredient substitutions that would make the item more nutritional. Talk about other items that could be served to balance out the calories, i.e., fix a low-calorie entrée if you're planning to make a rich dessert.

A great way to strengthen your child's math and reading skills is by having them help prepare the meal. Planning menus, researching and calculating how much of each ingredient is needed, then actually shopping for the food can help develop math and organizational skills, as well as an understanding of what to look for and what to avoid when grocery shopping.

The news and entertainment media also have a significant impact on a child's eating habits. Discuss with your child how an advertisement might affect the food choices they make and how they could make better choices.

## HEALTHFUL LIVING CURRICULUM

North Carolina public schools are just as serious as parents when it comes to students' health and well-being. The Healthful Living Curriculum, which is included in North Carolina's Standard Course of Study, combines both health education and physical education to help students have a better understanding of the choices they need to make to build a healthy lifestyle. Below is a sample of healthful living topics for the various grade levels. To access the complete curriculum, please go to the Department of Public Instruction's Web site at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/curriculum> and click on the Healthful Living link.

**GRADES K-3:** Children learn about healthy foods and appropriate serving sizes, relationships and coping skills in addition to other topics in health education. Physical education focuses on the joy of play, flexibility, movement and working cooperatively.

**GRADES 4-5:** Dealing with feelings, analyzing media influences on body size and food choices, growth and development, and relationship skills are just some of the topics covered in health education. Physical education covers the benefits of physical activity, development of skill combinations and respect of individual differences.

**GRADES 6-8:** Children learn about the benefits of resistance to harmful substances, mutually faithful relationships, dietary guidelines, and tolerance and appreciation of diversity. In physical education, students will learn about sportsmanship, critical elements of movement, and applying game strategies.

**GRADES 9-12:** Physical education and health are required for high school graduation. High school students learn about health risks and personal responsibility for health status, abstinence until marriage, skills for independent decision making and avoiding peer pressure, and how to analyze fad diets and develop skills for healthy weight management. Physical education addresses the benefits of fitness and physical activity, including concepts in wellness, officiating, and safety.

*In January 2003, the State Board of Education passed a recommendation that elementary schools consider the benefits of having 150 minutes of physical activity per week and middle schools should consider the benefits of 225 minutes per week. Local school systems are requested to keep this recommendation in mind when developing their physical education programs for students.*