



Be a Fit Kid

There's a lot of discussion these days about fit kids. People who care (parents, doctors, teachers, and others) want to know how to help kids be more fit.

Being fit is a way of saying a person eats well, gets a lot of physical activity (exercise), and has a healthy weight. If you're fit, your body works well, feels good, and can do all the things you want to do, like run around with your friends.

Some steps only parents can take — such as serving healthy meals or deciding to take the family on a nature hike. But kids can take charge, too, when it comes to health.

Here are five rules to live by, if you're a kid who wants to be fit. The trick is to follow these rules most of the time, knowing that some days (like your birthday) might call for cake and ice cream.

1. Eat a variety of foods, especially fruits and vegetables. You may have a favorite food, but the best choice is to eat a variety. If you eat different foods, you're more likely to get the nutrients your body needs. Taste new foods and old ones you haven't tried for a while. Some foods, such as green veggies, are more pleasing the older you get. Shoot for at least five servings of fruits and vegetables a day — two fruits and three vegetables. Here's one combination that might work for you:

- at breakfast: ½ cup (about 4 large) strawberries on your cereal
- with lunch: 6 baby carrots
- for a snack: an apple
- with dinner: ½ cup broccoli (about 2 big spears) and 1 cup of salad

2. Drink water and milk most often. When you're really thirsty, cold water is the No. 1 thirst-quencher. And there's a reason your school cafeteria offers cartons of milk. Kids need calcium to grow strong bones, and milk is a great source of this mineral. How much do kids need? Aim for 3 cups of milk per day, or its equivalent. You can mix it up by having milk and some other calcium-rich dairy foods. Here's one combination:

- 2 cups (about half a liter) of low-fat or nonfat milk
- 1 slice cheddar cheese
- ½ cup (small container) of yogurt

You probably will want something other than milk or water once in a while, so it's OK to have 100% juice, too. But try to limit sugary drinks, like sodas, juice cocktails, and fruit punches. They contain a lot of added sugar. Sugar just adds calories, not important nutrients.

3. Listen to your body. What does it feel like to be full? When you're eating, notice how your body feels and when your stomach feels comfortably full. Sometimes, people eat too much because they don't notice when they need to stop eating. Eating too much can make you feel uncomfortable and, over a period of

time, can lead to unhealthy weight gain.

4. Limit screen time. Limit screen time. What's screen time? It's the amount of time you spend watching TV or DVDs, playing video games (console systems or handheld games), and using the computer. The more time you spend on these sitting-down activities, the less time available for active stuff, like basketball, bike riding, and swimming. Try to spend no more than 2 hours a day on screen time, not counting computer use related to school.

5. Be active. One job you have as a kid — and it's a fun one — is that you get to figure out which activities you like best. Not everyone loves baseball or soccer. Maybe your passion is karate, or kickball, or dancing. Ask your parents to help you do your favorite activities regularly. Find ways to be active every day. You might even write down a list of fun stuff to do, so you can refer to it when your mom or dad says it's time to stop watching TV or playing computer games!

Speaking of parents, they can be a big help if you want to be a fit kid. For instance, they can stock the house with healthy foods and plan physical activities for the family. Tell your parents about these five steps you want to take and maybe you can teach them a thing or two. If you're a fit kid, why shouldn't you have a fit mom and a fit dad?

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