

## ***15 Simple Energy Balance Tips***

*By Ellen Sviland, MS, RD, LD, CNSD*

*Energy Balance is a simple equation that can change your child's life. It's also the source of some serious concern for parents. All busy parents, worry about making choices that are right for their children. Ensuring that kids are active and healthy does not need to be a struggle for parents. Modifying your lifestyle to include small 'balancing' changes will help your whole family develop life-long habits and enable them to reach and maintain a healthy weight. Get started today with these fun and simple ideas to make energy balance a part of your daily life.*

***1. Create a healthy chain reaction***

Close social ties play an important role in weight loss. Make one day an "active day" with your family and watch the idea spread through other families in your circle of friends.

***2. Remember what's in it for your kids***

Studies show that regular physical activity is more than balancing calories in with calories out – it can improve sleep, focus, and confidence in children.

***3. Make just one dietary change at a time***

Dietitians recommend making one change at a time. Try adding one serving of fruits and vegetables each week.

***4. Make physical activity fun***

Buy inexpensive pedometers and track how much each family member walks in a weekend.

***5. Eat – and cook – more meals as a family***

Kids who help prepare meals are more interested in eating them. Dining as a family is also a good way to model healthful habits.

***6. Make being active easy***

Provide kids with plenty of opportunities for exercise. Examples include organizing outdoor play dates, dancing, skipping rope, joining a sports team, and having athletic equipment readily available for kids to use.

***7. Be a role model for good health***

Children mimic the behavior habits of their parents. Show kids that regular exercise and eating healthfully makes you feel good, is fun, and is part of your regular daily routine.

***8. Take your kids food shopping***

Children are more likely to try new foods when they are involved in the food selection process. You can also use this opportunity to teach them about nutrients in foods, label reading, and healthful eating for life.

9. *Make breakfast count*

A morning meal that includes whole grains, protein, and fiber provides children with energy for learning, exercise, and other daily activities.

10. *Be creative*

Don't be afraid to introduce new foods to your children. Variety can pique kids' interests and expand their taste preferences, while also ensuring that a wide range of vitamins and minerals are eaten every day.

11. *Your feet were made for walking*

Fitness experts say grown ups and kids should take at least 10,000 steps every day. So take the stairs instead of the elevator, walk your dog, do a little dance, park a little farther away- every step counts! Lots of small steps add up to one big leap.

12. *Fitness for the whole family*

Everyone in a family- young and old- benefits from physical activity. Turn off the TV, the computer, or video games and do something as a family. It is so much easier to stay motivated when everyone is in it together.

13. *Use color*

An easy way to ensure that you and your family eat plenty of vitamins and minerals is to utilize color. Incorporate a variety of brightly colored fruits and veggies to meals and snacks. See how many colors you can get onto one plate!

14. *Plant a fruit and vegetable garden with your kids*

Try planting a few different kinds of fruits and vegetables with your children. Have fun watching them grow and enjoying them with meals and snacks!

15. *Use exercise as a cure for boredom*

Sometimes it can be tempting to snack when you and your kids are feeling bored. Help your child to channel his/her boredom in a more productive direction, such as exercise.

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