



Did you know that being active every day is the best way to keep extra weight off and feel great?

Think about how good it would feel to be stronger and healthier. Taking care of your body can help you look and feel your best.

Move your body

Try to get 60 minutes of physical activity most days of the week. It doesn't all have to be at once. You can break it up. Try walking instead of getting a ride, or take the stairs instead of the escalator.

It's also important to get more intense physical activity several times a week. Biking, yoga, martial arts, shooting hoops, cardio funk dance class—what sounds good to you? Try out different activities and sports until you find one that you enjoy doing—inside or outdoors, alone or with a friend, in a group or on a team.

Being as active as you can throughout the day will help you:

- feel less stressed
- boost your mood
- tone your muscles
- build your self-confidence
- have more energy all day
- reach a healthy weight
- help prevent health problems

Fuel up

Are you getting enough:

- **Fruits and vegetables?** Aim for 5 to 9 servings (3 to 4 cups) every day. Choose lots of different colors and keep trying new ones until you find your favorites.
- **Calcium?** Your body needs at least 4 servings of low-fat or nonfat dairy products every day to build strong bones and teeth. If you can't digest milk products (lactose-intolerant), try using *Lactaid* or *Dairy Ease*. If this doesn't work for you, take a supplement with calcium carbonate, such as *Tums* or *Viactiv*.
- **Water?** Try to drink at least 6 glasses of water each day; more when you're working out.

Appreciate your changing body

Your body and mind are changing and growing a lot. You need healthy foods and exercise for strength and energy. Some people think they have to look like models to be okay—really thin or really muscular. But look around you: Few people really look like that. You can be healthy and find a “look” that fits you.

Find a healthy weight

Being overweight and out of shape increases your risk for health problems. Your doctor is the best person to help you decide if your weight is a healthy one for you. If you decide together that it's time to work on your weight, keep the following in mind:

Things that work

- **Fuel up with breakfast every day.** People who have lost weight and kept it off make it a habit to eat a healthy breakfast.
- **Eat 5 to 9 servings of fruits and vegetables each day.** Try for 3 to 4 cups each day. Shoot for a variety—lots of different colors on your plate. (P. S. French fries are not a vegetable!)
- **Eat at home more often.** Try to sit down to eat a meal with your family or roommates. Households who cook and eat together usually eat healthier, since food you make at home tends to be more nutritious.
- **Eat slowly.** If you scarf your food, your stomach doesn't have a chance to catch up and tell you that it's full.
- **Prepare for snack attacks.** Keep healthy snacks around for after school or between classes. Pretzels, an orange, half a bagel, a small baggie of nuts, low-fat whole wheat crackers, air-popped popcorn, and baby carrots are all easy to keep in your backpack. Ask your family or housemates to help you keep healthy snacks in the house and junk foods out.

- **Pay attention to serving sizes.** A cup is about the size of your fist. A serving of meat is the size of a deck of cards. Seem small? You may be eating extra large helpings and not even know it.
- **Move your body.** The more you move, the more your body can burn off extra energy (calories). Aim for 60 minutes a day. It's easier if you can find activities you like, so that working out is fun, instead of something you have to do.

Things to avoid

- **Skip meals or go too long without eating.** If you get too hungry, you're more likely to overeat, or choose unhealthy foods.
- **Waste your time with "crash" diets.** You may lose some weight (usually water), but you'll likely gain it all back plus more. Plus, this kind of dieting can make you tired and moody, and deprive your body of nutrition. Remember that diet pills and supplements don't work and can be dangerous.
- **Spend your life in front of a screen.** Hours at the computer? Movie marathons? Your body burns more calories when you're sleeping! Start cutting back on screen time (TV, computers, and video games) to no more than 1 or 2 hours a day. And be careful about snacking in front of the screen. It's easy to eat too much without even noticing.
- **Try not to drink your calories.** Sodas are liquid sugar (up to 12 spoonfuls in a can) and have been linked to

weight gain. Sweet teas, juice, and sports drinks are all loaded with sugar and extra calories. Cut way back, switch to sugar-free, or ditch them entirely.

- **Try not to eat when you are not hungry.** If you find yourself eating when you feel bored, sad, stressed-out, or lonely, you may be using food to deal with feelings. Talk to your doctor or a counselor for help.

Little changes. Big rewards.

When you are ready to make a change, start slowly and pay attention to how you feel as you add more healthy foods and regular exercise to your day. You don't have to give up all of the things you like, and you don't have to do it all at once. Small changes that you can stick with add up over time. Also, tell your friends and family you're working on eating well and getting more exercise. Ask for their support.

How to reduce fat and calories if you eat fast foods

- Order food without cheese, sour cream, or mayonnaise. Go for ketchup or mustard instead.
- Avoid deep-fried foods like fries, chips, onion rings, and chicken strips.
- Drink water or low-fat milk instead of soda.
- Most fast food serving sizes are huge. Try sharing your meal with a friend or order the smaller sizes.
- Order just the sandwich and hold the fries, or try a side salad instead.

How Kaiser Permanente can help you make choices that are right for you

To learn more about nutrition and fitness, talk to your doctor or nurse practitioner, or check out his or her homepage for lots of information and resources: kp.org/mydoctor. You can make your own confidential appointments and come in to see a doctor, nurse, or counselor at Kaiser Permanente clinics. All facilities have medical professionals who specialize in teen and young adult patients.

You only get one body. Healthy eating and active living will help you look and feel your best.

More resources

- Smart Mouth
smartmouth.org
- USDA Food Guidance System
mypyramid.gov
- TeensHealth Page
kidshealth.org/teen
- Planned Parenthood's Teen Page
teenwire.com

Kaiser Permanente
kp.org

Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook

The Right Moves to Getting Fit and Feeling Great, Tina Schwager and Michele Schuerger, Free Spirit publishing, 1998.