

An Eight-Week Family Fitness Plan: To Reduce the Obesity Threat to Your Family

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Are you looking forward to taking some small steps toward reducing the threat of obesity in your home and, at the same time, making your family more healthy?

We've taken many of the tips contained in our book, *SuperSized Kids*, and arranged them into our eight-week plan for reducing the obesity threat to your family. Each week in the plan will take a little bit more work and effort, building on what you've done the previous week, but all of the steps are simple. They just require a little determination. And we guarantee that the rewards will make it more than worth it!

We suggest you first read over these steps. Then, set a time to begin. The holiday season or the first week of the school year may not be a good time to start (as there is SO much going on), but a week or two after the start of school or summertime can be a great time to begin.

We know some of you will be ready to jump right in and do all the steps we've suggested for each week. That's wonderful! But it's OK if you feel this would be too dramatic or too quick for your family. No problem at all—just slow it down.

Pick one step each week in each category, or every other week, or even one step a month. That way, you'll be at the end of the plan in either four or eight months—but either way, your family will be healthier. Finishing at your own pace is more important than starting and not finishing!

Beware that doing too much too quickly can also be harmful. If you go at this program with too much intensity, there may be a backlash from your family. You'll need

to be sensitive to the family relationships in order to have the greatest success.

For example, if you try to alter your child's habit pattern too quickly or multiple habits at once, there will be a negative response unless you include the child in the process and make it something fun for the whole family.

If you or your child gets sore or injured from the new exercise program, you or they are likely to quit the program entirely. The answer is moderation and gradual steady changes in lifestyle that the body, mind and spirit will tolerate. Everyone will be happier (and healthier) as a result.

Remember that kids love rewards, affirmation and positive feedback. So, we've developed certificates of achievement that you can adapt for your child and print off. They are at our SuperSizedKids.com website. You can present your child with a diploma each week of the plan.

At the end of the plan, you'll have created a foundation that not only will give great rewards to you and your family, but we bet you'll be ready to look for other ways you can become even healthier.

At the end of each week, have a family meeting to assess your progress. Be sure to listen to and value the input from the children, but always remember you are the gatekeeper as well as quarterback and give them reasonable answers to their questions.

Then again at the end of the eight-week program, have a summary family meeting. Decide which steps worked well for your family and which did not. Decide which you want to incorporate into your family health plan.

Week 1

Family Project

- Get a blank notebook and start a family health journal to keep track of your progress
- Calculate the BMI (and, if possible, get a blood pressure reading) for each family member and record it in your journal. You can figure out your BMI in Appendix C or at our website (www.SuperSizedKids.com.)

Healthier Activities

- Take the blank activity pyramid on page xx and talk about what you could do as a family. Record your ideas in your journal.
- Test yourself and each child to see how many steps you each can climb or how far you can quickly walk without getting short of breath. Write it down in the journal so that you can refer to it later.

Healthier Mealtimes at Home

- Use an answering machine during dinner at home.
- Reduce the number of visits to fast food restaurants by one visit per week.
- Switch from large to small dinner plates.

Healthier Nutrition

- Eat at least one serving of fruit or vegetables at each meal.
- Strategize with your kids about how to increase their intake of plant proteins (dried beans and peas, nuts and seeds, soy products). Try a different one of their ideas each day this week.

Rest

- Cut the caffeine (chocolate, cocoa, soft drinks) after 3 P.M.

Media

- Cut your child's media time (total TV, computer and video game time) to less than four hours a day.
- Remove the TV, computer and video game machines from the bedrooms and move them to a common area.

Week 2

Family Project

- Have a family meeting to discuss your progress during the first week. What worked? What didn't? What was fun? What was unrewarding? What have you learned? What else do you want to change? Make notes in your journal.
- As a family, learn how to read food labels by studying items in your kitchen (refer to chapter 9, page 00, for tips on label reading).
- Plan to shop together for groceries once a month and be sure to review food labels.

Healthier Activities

- Begin planning exercise for the week for each family member

Healthier Mealtimes at Home

- Turn off the TV during meals
- Reduce desserts to smaller portions and no more than one per day. Try replacing desserts with fresh fruit.
- Let the children who can, serve their own plates.

Healthier Nutrition

- Reduce red meat to no more than three meals a week.
- Begin trying different fish recipes or vegetarian protein recipes.

Rest

- Set and enforce bedtime and wake-up time (see page 00).

Media

- Try a TV-free night one day this week (or, make it a media-free night).

Week 3

Family Project

- Have a family meeting to discuss your progress during the second week and record your progress.
- Reduce or eliminate foods with trans fats (hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oils).

Healthier Activities

- Try to exercise as a family at least once a week.
- Review the progress of each family member regarding their individual activity each day.

Healthier Mealtimes at Home

- Discuss as a family how you could increase the number of family meals.
- Plan at least two courses for each meal, with five minutes between courses.

Healthier Nutrition

- If using whole milk, change to 2 percent. If using 2 percent, change to 1 percent.
- Eat a serving of fish or lean poultry at least twice a week.
- Eat a serving of plant protein (beans, nuts, soy, etc.) at least twice a week.

Rest

- Be sure all children are getting at least seven hours of sleep every night.

Media

- Cut media time to two hours or less a day.

Week 4

Family Project

- Have a family meeting to discuss and record your progress during the third week.
- Reduce the amount of sodas, fruit drinks, and other sugared drinks – consider cutting the number in half.
- Begin serving water with family meals (see page 00).

Healthier Activities

- Find and do a fun physical activity for the family for this weekend (we've got some suggestions on page 00).
- Retest the family to see how many steps you each can climb or how far you can quickly walk without getting short of breath. Record your results and compare them to Week 1. How much progress have you made?

Healthier Mealtimes at Home

- Eat together as a family at least three meals a week.
- Reduce desserts to three meals a week.
- Work to make family meals fun.
- No fussing at family meals.
- Ask lots of questions of your kids and then listen to their answers.

Healthier Nutrition

- Have at least two servings of fruits or vegetables at each meal.
- Reduce or eliminate fried foods.

Rest

- No TV or computer within one hour of bedtime.

Media

- Try a TV-free (or media-free) night two days this week.

Week 5

Family Project

- Have a family meeting to discuss and record your progress during the fourth week.
- Have healthy snacks available, but especially for after school and weekends.

Healthier Activities

- Walk with your kids to school, if possible.
- Park farther away from stores and walk in.

Healthier Mealtimes at Home

- Beginning this week, no snacking in front of the TV or computer.
- Begin watching and reducing portion sizes.

Healthier Nutrition

- Reduce red meat to no more than two meals a week.
- Eat fish or lean poultry at least three times a week.
- Eat plant protein at least three times a week.

Rest

- Be sure all children are getting at least eight hours of sleep every night.

Media

- Cut media time to less than an hour a day.

Week 6

Family Project

- Have a family meeting to discuss and record your progress during the fifth week.
- Plan to shop for groceries together once every one or two weeks and be sure to review labels. Plan plenty of time and have fun! (see page 00).
- Teach children how to compare prices and value. Calculate the cost per ounce, pound, sheet, etc. and determine which is the best dollar value for the nutrient impact (see page 00).
- Reduce the amount of sodas, fruit drinks, and other sugared drinks – consider cutting the number in half (you may have done this once already in Week 4).

Healthier Activities

- Try to exercise as a family at least twice this week.
- Review again, the progress each of you is making in daily activity.

Healthier Mealtimes at Home

- Eat together as a family at least five meals a week.
- Reduce desserts to two a week.
- Look at the food pyramid and decide how you can improve your family food choices.

Healthier Nutrition

- If using 2 percent milk, change to 1 percent. If using 1 percent, change to skim.
- Be sure your kids are getting a serving of a healthy whole-grain food once a day.

Rest

- Give kids a thirty-minute warning before bedtime.

Media

- Try a TV-free (or media-free) night three days this week

Week 7

Family Project

- Have a family meeting to discuss and record your progress during the sixth week.
- Together with your kids, examine your pantry and refrigerator and choose the unhealthy foods you would like to get rid of. Then begin to eliminate them.

Healthier Activities

- Try to exercise as a family at least three times this week.

Healthier Mealtimes at Home

- Discuss as a family how everyone can begin having breakfast most days of the week (see page 00).
- Try to cut out all or most sweets.
- Begin using the blank food pyramid to plan a week's worth of family meals (see page 00).

Healthier Nutrition

- Reduce red meat to no more than one meal a week.
- Eat fish or lean poultry at least five times a week.
- Eat plant protein at least five times a week.

Rest

- Try to see that everyone in the family gets nine hours of sleep every night.

Media

- If you haven't already, now's the time to get the TV or Internet out of the child's bedroom.

Week 8

Family Project

- Recheck every family member's BMI and blood pressure and compare them to the values you obtained from Week 1.
- Have a family meeting to review and record your eight-week journey.
- Consider evaluating each child in the family with the assessment tool in Appendix A.
- If you've had difficulty during this last week, or if these suggestions have not been helpful for your family, consider an appointment with a registered dietician or a weight-loss center that has a program designed for children.

Healthier Activities

- Meet as a family to talk about how far you've come these last two months and what you'd each like to do next.
- Discuss how regular physical activity will continue to be a part of the daily family routine. Activity, rest and good nutrition are the keys to maintaining weight loss and fitness.
- Again test yourself and each child to see how many steps you each can climb or how far you can quickly walk without getting short of breath. How much progress has each person made?
- Try to exercise as a family at least four or five times this week.

Healthier Mealtimes at Home

- Eat together as a family at least seven meals a week.
- Review with your family how you could continue to improve your nutrition at home.

Healthier Nutrition

- If using 1 percent milk, change to skim milk.
- Be sure your kids are getting three servings of a healthy whole-grain food each day.
- Be sure that your kids are eating healthy protein two or three times a day.

Rest

- Talk as a family how about how the "rest" experiments have worked.
- What do you want to continue?
- What do you want to change?

Media

- Try one week without any TV or computer.
- Plan a family night to discuss how you've done with media. What's worked? What has not?