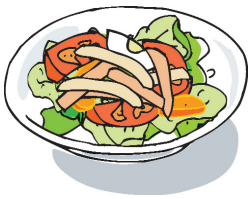
Helping Youth **Make Better** Food Choices

The tips at right are based on strategies and approaches used by nutrition, health and public health professionals who work with children, youth and families. These professionals shared their ideas for helping youth make better food choices in keeping with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* as part of an **Action for Healthy Kids** research project that involved over 1,400 respondents nationwide.

Please refer any child with a special dietary need or health condition to an appropriate health care professional.

Action for Healthy Kids is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to addressing the epidemic of overweight, undernourished and sedentary youth by focusing on changes in schools. Through volunteer Teams in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, and a network of 60 national Partner organizations, Action for Healthy Kids works to improve children's nutrition and increase physical activity, which will in turn improve their readiness to learn. For more information, visit **www.ActionForHealthyKids.org**

Tips for Community Organizations



Be culturally aware. Assemble materials for parents and kids in their native languages and be familiar with commonly eaten ethnic foods.

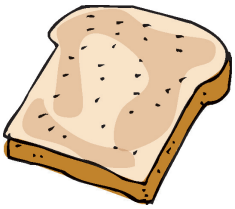
Be interactive. Lead grocery store tours or hold taste tests so families can sample new foods. Offer coupons for healthful foods.

Make the connection. Educate youth on the connection between healthy eating and other things such as academics or sports.

Track progress. Have kids keep a food diary. Review with them what they are eating as they progress toward eating healthier foods.

Be a good role model. When kids see adults practicing what they preach, they are more likely to take those lessons to heart.

Make it simple. Provide information on healthful foods to serve for meals and snacks. Keep ideas simple with easy-to-find ingredients.



Get involved and bring the kids! Encourage officials to set standards on what foods may be marketed to kids in schools and on TV.

Find "change agents"! This approach trains a group of teens to market physical activity and healthy eating to their fellow students/peers.

Farm to table. Teach kids where food comes from and how it is raised and grown. Visit food plants or a dairy farm. Create a community garden.

Make it real. Show kids how much sugar is in soda pop, iced tea or an energy drink by measuring it with sugar cubes.

Provide tools. Bring families together and teach them to read food labels, MyPyramid charts, shopping lists and recipes.

Use what works. Market better food choices with what is proven to work: contemporary music, surfer and skater models.

Portion distortion. Teach about realistic food portions using common items. Focus on age-appropriate serving sizes.

Positive media messages. Support industry and media that are working for policy changes that provide positive nutrition messages.

Action for Healthy Kids®

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