

Making Healthy Goals a Family Affair Building up Your Family for Better Health

Let's face it. Life can be hectic. Busyness is the climate of our culture. It doesn't take us long to see a laundry list of why our healthy goals look impossible... *drop the kids at school, go to work, eat donuts and coffee, skip lunch, go to a meeting, pick up a few groceries, take kids to scouts, grab a pizza and a bottle of soda for dinner, pick up kids from sports practice, do laundry, clean house, prepare for a new day - phew!*

"Take a look at your kids. Would you recognize them in a lineup? If life is so chaotic you're rarely together, that needs to change."¹

Many of the activities our families are involved in are wonderful experiences, but our schedules can also be barriers to getting healthy. So, instead of looking at these activities as barriers, why not make them opportunities for healthy change and modeling healthy behavior for the whole family. Don't let your family *be* your setback. Create opportunities for yourself and your family to be

healthier. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Plan regular family fun, such as weekend outings or fun family vacations. Allow the family to vote on the options, and majority rules. That means you don't always get what you want, but sometimes you do—a good life lesson.¹
- Take a family hike every month.²
- Lead your child's scout troop.
- Create and maintain a family garden.²
- Plan a Spring camping trip.²
- Get a group of friends together, and take a weekly class at the YMCA,² or take community education fitness or nutrition classes.
- Coach your child's sports team,² and exercise with them.
- Get exercise when watching your kids' games by walking around the field.
- Sign up and train as a family for a fun run, bicycling, or walking event.
- Schedule a family meal time. Be realistic, but get everyone together several nights a week¹ (yes, put it on the calendar if you need to). A study published in the *Archives of*

Set a date with your family

Set a date with your family and create some of your own healthy ideas. To get the whole family involved, use the YMCA's Fun Brainstorm Worksheet found at http://www.ymca.net/downloads/061212_ymcanet_resolution_worksheet.pdf.

Family Medicine showed that "kids eating with their parents were eating less fast food, less soda, and consuming more fruits and vegetables.... Those kids, therefore, had a lower intake of saturated fats and carbohydrates that raise blood sugar, linked with diabetes and hardening of the arteries..."³

- Get the family involved in community volunteer work,¹ like community clean-up events or preparing and serving healthy food at a community or church event.

Remember to take small steps. Don't overwhelm yourself or your kids with too many goals. Don't make your schedule busier—just make it healthier. Start small; get reacquainted with your kids, and make times together fun for the whole family.¹

References:

1. Davis, JL (2005). Make 2005 new year's resolutions a reality. Retrieved January 5, 2007. From <http://www.webmd.com/content/article/97/103973.htm>.
2. YMCA (2007). Building family new year's resolutions: fun brainstorm worksheet. Retrieved January 5, 2005. From http://www.ymca.net/downloads/061212_ymcanet_resolution_worksheet.pdf.
3. Davis, JL (2004). Family-sized new year's resolutions. Retrieved January 5, 2007. From <http://www.webmd.com/content/article/48/39229.htm>.

Educational programs of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, or national origin.
The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating