



Do You Have a “Healthy Home Environment” for the Holidays?

Good health means enjoying the emotional and spiritual renewal that we all receive from family and friends by participating in holiday festivities.

A “healthy home” also provides a supportive environment for positive health habits: healthy foods and opportunities for increased physical activity.

What are the components of a healthy home environment?

■ **Inventory your home “food environment”.**

Go to the cupboard and refrigerator and make a list of the snack items and beverages that add calories but little else. These items include: soda pop, cookies, chips and other salty snack items, etc. If in doubt, check the nutrition label.

Write down an alternative food that could be substituted for less healthy foods. Take your list to the grocery store and make positive changes in items you purchase.

■ **Serve “healthy” holiday foods for snacks, meals and parties for family and friends.**

Your guests will appreciate having healthy options. Be sure to offer fruits and vegetables. Be creative with lower-calorie appetizers and desserts. Look at your recipes and where possible use less fat, sugar and salt.

Provide pitchers of water in addition to the usual “holiday” beverages. Think “small” in terms of serving sizes. Often we can enjoy a taste or two of a food as much as a large portion. Be aware that the visual cue for a “normal” serving has increased over the past decades.

■ **Inventory your family’s television or video viewing time.**

Allow two hours or less per day of television viewing for children ages 2 and above. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children two years of age or younger not be exposed to television viewing.

Check a television guide and determine what programming you wish to watch. Children who watch 4 or more hours of television per day have been found to have a greater amount of body fat and weigh more than children who watch two hours or less per day.

■ **Develop a list of ideas to increase physical activity for family members.**

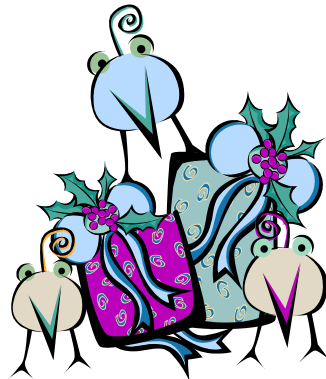
Think about active or creative games the children like to play. Use jump ropes, yo-yos, athletic shoes or equipment, or a membership in a fitness club for a great holiday gift.



Consider giving pedometers to encourage family members to increase their daily steps. If you need other ideas go to a sporting goods store and talk to their staff.

■ **Put “exercise” on the top of your holiday to-do list.**

If you make fitness a priority it is more likely to get done. Develop a certain time of the day that you set aside to exercise. Be a good role model for your children.



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