

Introduction to *Eat Well & Keep Moving*

Eat Well & Keep Moving equips children with the knowledge and skills they need to lead more healthful lives by choosing nutritious diets and being physically active. Research shows that a good diet and adequate physical activity can significantly reduce the risk of obesity and chronic diseases such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and some cancers. Yet children today are not eating the fruits and vegetables or getting the physical activity they need to be healthy both now and in the future.

The *Eat Well & Keep Moving* program was launched to provide students with the tools they need to turn this trend around. Initially designed as a joint research project between the Harvard School of Public Health and Baltimore City Public Schools, *Eat Well & Keep Moving* has developed into a comprehensive program that has been introduced in school systems throughout the country.

Benefits of Eating Well and Keeping Moving

- ▶ Eating well and being active help reduce the risk of obesity, heart disease, some cancers, high blood pressure, and diabetes.
- ▶ Being physically active helps students feel better.
- ▶ Eating well helps children grow, develop, and do well in school.

Unlike traditional health curricula, *Eat Well & Keep Moving* is a multifaceted program encompassing all aspects of the learning environment from the classroom, the cafeteria, and the gymnasium to school hallways, students' homes, and even community centers. This varied approach helps reinforce important messages about nutrition and physical activity and increases the chance that students will eat well and keep moving throughout their lives. The program is also designed to use existing school resources, to fit within school curricula, and to be inexpensive to implement.

Children at Risk

Obesity, coronary heart disease, certain cancers, diabetes, and high blood pressure are affected by a person's diet and level of physical activity. In many cases, disorders such as obesity and coronary heart disease begin early in childhood.

Yet many children are not eating the food and getting the exercise they need to combat these chronic diseases and to promote lifelong good health. Indeed, the number of children who are overweight is on the rise in the United States and around the world. And type 2 diabetes, a disease that used to be found primarily in adults, is increasingly diagnosed in youths. Especially disconcerting is that as children age and move into adolescence and then adulthood, they become progressively less active and choose less healthy diets.

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This makes it even more important for children to develop healthful habits early in life so that these practices can be sustained into adulthood.

Facts About Children's Health

- ▶ Children are eating fewer than the recommended number of daily servings of fruits and vegetables.
- ▶ Children are drinking too many sugary drinks.
- ▶ Children are eating too many foods high in saturated fat.
- ▶ Twenty-three percent of children do not participate in any free time physical activity.
- ▶ In the United States, over one-third of children and adolescents are obese.
- ▶ Children spend more time watching television and using recreational media than they spend in school.

Unfortunately, with many school systems limiting or eliminating physical education and with food industry advertising influencing children to choose foods high in saturated fat and sugar, children do not always have the chance to reap the benefits of a lifestyle marked by a good diet and adequate physical activity.

Program Overview

Eat Well & Keep Moving helps children learn about and adopt healthy nutrition and physical activity practices. Its six interlinked components—the classroom, food services, physical education, staff wellness, parent involvement, and school-wide promotional campaigns—work together to create a supportive learning environment. The program is also designed to use existing school resources, to fit within school curricula, and to be inexpensive to implement.

The program focuses on eight nutrition and physical activity messages, called the *Principles of Healthy Living*:

1. Make the switch from sugary drinks to water.
2. Choose colorful fruits and vegetables instead junk food.
3. Choose whole-grain foods and limit foods with added sugar.
4. Choose foods with healthy fat, limit foods high in saturated fat, and avoid foods with trans fat.
5. Eat a nutritious breakfast every morning.
6. Be physically active every day for at least an hour.
7. Limit TV and other recreational screen time to 2 hours or less per day.
8. Get enough sleep to give the brain and body the rest they need.

In addition to its specific goals of getting students to eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains; eat fewer foods high in sugar, salt, saturated fat, and without trans fat; be

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more physically active; and be less inactive, the *Eat Well & Keep Moving* program also has one overarching goal. This goal is to raise the overall awareness of all the participants involved in the program (students, principals, teachers, food service staff, and parents) and to mobilize them toward the common goal of getting children to eat well and keep moving.

Here is a brief overview of the program's six interlinked components:

► **Staff Wellness:** This component piques the interest of school staff in the *Eat Well & Keep Moving* program. By familiarizing staff members with the different dimensions of wellness and empowering them to take action regarding their own health, teachers and food service personnel become motivated and informed role models for students. Through the wellness program, staff members learn about nutrition and physical activity on a personal level while also becoming acquainted with the topics of the classroom activities.

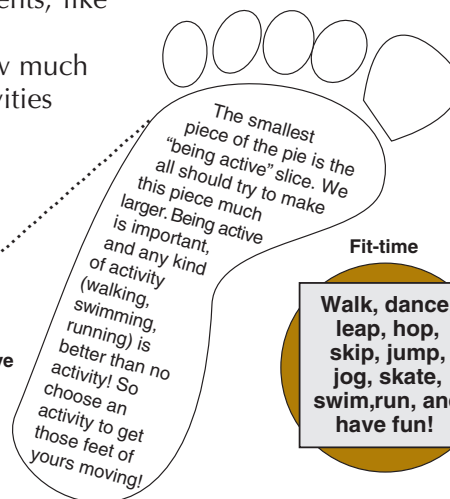
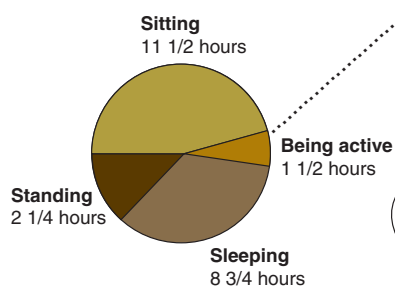
► **The Classroom:** Of all the components, the classroom provides the students with the greatest exposure to the program's nutrition and physical activity messages. The classroom lessons, which complement existing school curricula, give students the knowledge and skills they need to make healthful lifestyle choices. Through a feature unique to these lessons, students frequently learn about nutrition while actually being physically active in the classroom. Many classroom activities also link to other components of the program: Lesson extensions become school-wide promotions, Eat Well cards provide links to food promotions in the cafeteria, and Keep Moving cards address physical activity topics being taught in physical education class.



A Piece of the Pie?

Our days can be divided into many different parts. We sleep. We sit. We are active. The following pie chart shows how a lot of students, like you, spend their days.

How would your own pie chart look? How much of your sit-time is spent on screen-time activities for fun? Can you trade some of that sit-time activities to get a better night's sleep?



Fit-time
Walk, dance, leap, hop, skip, jump, jog, skate, swim, run, and have fun!

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► Sample Keep Moving card linking physical education and the classroom.

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► **Physical Education:** This component reinforces the messages taught in the classroom by using lesson plans that integrate nutrition with physical activities. This component consists of nine microunits that allow you to present 5-minute lessons on the importance of eating well and being physically active. Currently, many districts across the country are limiting or eliminating physical education in school curricula. To address this trend, the *Eat Well & Keep Moving* program also gets students physically active through classroom lessons and school-wide walking programs.

► **Food Services:** This component ensures that healthful food choices are available and promoted in the school cafeteria. The objectives of the food service component include increasing the availability of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains; using healthy fat in food preparation; decreasing the saturated and trans fat served to students; and decreasing the added sugar in foods and beverages served to students. The cafeteria also serves as a learning laboratory, allowing students to put nutrition knowledge into practice. Each week in the classrooms and cafeteria, colorful posters, informational cards, and catchy songs are used to promote healthful food choices on the lunch menu.



Stir-Fry With Healthy Oils!

Stir-fry means to cook over high heat while briskly stirring the ingredients so that they cook evenly. Because the vegetables are cut into small pieces, they cook quickly, stay crisp and delicious, and retain most of their nutrients and fresh flavor.

Unlike foods fried in butter, which is high in saturated (unhealthy) fat, stir-fry dishes often have healthy fat, because they are often cooked in healthy oils like vegetable oil.



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► Sample Eat Well card linking the cafeteria and the classroom.

► **School-Wide Campaigns:** This component offers students and teachers fun and engaging ways to put into practice the messages of the program. Walking clubs encourage classes to go on regular walks around their school and pretend to track their progress on world maps. The Get 3 At School and 5+ A Day promotion has students track their fruit and vegetable consumption for a week, while the Freeze My TV promotion encourages

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students to limit the time they spend watching television and engage in other recreational screen time activities.

► **Parent Involvement:** Parents and family members become involved in activities that complement the messages of the program, thereby increasing the chances that the dietary and lifestyle changes students make will become a regular part of family life. Through a unique part of the program, community-based health organizations, which do not usually work directly with schools, are brought in to offer nutrition and physical activity programs to parents. In addition, school newsletters for parents include nutrition and physical activity information that students learn in the classroom, and school activities (such as Parent Fun Nights) provide families with the opportunity to see exactly what their children are learning through the *Eat Well & Keep Moving* program.

Proven Results

Eat Well & Keep Moving was very well received during its 4-year demonstration program in 14 Baltimore elementary schools. Students rated the lessons and promotional activities very highly, and 100% of responding teachers said they would teach the program's lessons again. Principals gave priority to the program, noting that it addressed many of their schools' goals, especially by involving parents in school activities. And educators liked that *Eat Well & Keep Moving* considers the health and well-being of the whole child—the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual dimensions.

Data from the research study indicate that students receiving the program ate significantly more fruits and vegetables, ate less food high in saturated fat, watched less television, and improved their knowledge of nutrition and physical activity.

Gortmaker, S.L., L.W.Y. Cheung, K.B. Peterson, G. Chornitz, J.H. Cradle, H. Dart, M.K. Fox, R.B. Bullock, A.M. Sobol, G. Colditz, A.E. Field, and N. Laird. 1999. Impact of a school-based interdisciplinary intervention on diet and physical activity among urban primary school children. *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* 153: 975-83.

Based on these data, on the low implementation cost, and on positive responses from principals, teachers, and students, in the fall of 1997 the City of Baltimore made *Eat Well & Keep Moving* available to elementary schools throughout the city. As part of this city-wide institutionalization of the program, training workshops were held with teachers from approximately half of all the elementary schools by September of 1999. The program received the Dannon Institute Award for Excellence in Community Nutrition in 2000. Since the publication of the first edition of *Eat Well & Keep Moving* in 2001, the program has been disseminated across the United States and internationally.

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