



# Steps to Better Nutrition in 2010

The following ideas can help your family to have healthier eating habits this year- and in years to come. Have a happy, healthy new year!

## Plan, Plan, Plan

Take time to look at everyone's weekly schedule and plan meals and snacks that fit your family's lifestyle. You can save time and money, and improve your family's nutrition. Consider casseroles, crockpot meals, hearty soups, and "planned leftovers." Chili can be served as a main dish, over baked potatoes with grated cheese, in a taco or tortilla, or on salad greens as part of a taco salad. Keep a back up meal on hand, such as pasta and spaghetti sauce, canned soup, veggie burgers, etc. Pack snacks such as fruit, graham crackers, juice boxes, water bottles, trail mix or dry cereal to avoid relying on vending machines.

## Take Time to Eat With Your Family

It may seem impossible to have family meals, but studies show it is worth the effort. Eating meals together is associated with a higher intake of fruits, vegetables, grains and calcium-rich foods, and lower soda intake. If your family is not used to eating together, start by adding just one family meal per week. If dinnertime is too hectic, try a weekend breakfast or lunch. Turn off the TV and phones and enjoy the food and each other's company.

## Make Cooking a Family Affair

Let your children help with cooking as their age and abilities allow. Kids have more interest in eating things they help to make, and cooking is a skill that will serve them well for a lifetime. Have special nights such as homemade pizza or theme nights such as Italian or Mexican.

## Think About What You Drink

It's important to drink plenty of fluids throughout the day, but drinks can add extra calories too. Focus on water and limit the amount of sugary drinks such as fruit drinks, regular soda, and sweetened tea. Even 100% fruit juice has natural sugar. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends limiting fruit juice in children 1 – 6 years old to 4-6 ounces/day. Older children should not have more than 8 – 12 ounces/day. Beware of energy drinks that are often full of sugar and caffeine, and they are expensive! Even if they have added vitamins, they are high in calories and can cause jitteriness, upset stomach and headaches. The best energy boost comes from healthy living!