



Diabetes: A Family Matter **Family Get Together**

Overview:

At the next family get-together why not try placing some emphasis on healthy lifestyles. You might want to begin the event with a special invitation that informs everyone that something special is going to be happening at the next family get together.

Brief Description:

This special get together could occur at a birthday party, anniversary celebration, family reunion, holiday event, a Sunday dinner, backyard barbecue, or any day you want to declare as special. No exact way to make this happen is suggested, but many ideas are provided as you consider ways to have a healthy event.

Objectives:

1. Inform family members, young and old, about family health risks.
2. Identify ways family members can improve their health.
3. Plan changes in family routines to improve member health.
4. Set individual and family goals to increase health.

Participants:

Involve young and old! This activity can include children, parents, and grandparents. You may even want to include extended family members as well. If your family is large or members live in different places then you may want to plan more than a single get together so that all members can be involved.

Costs:

It is up to you to decide how much you want to spend on the event. This can be as inexpensive or as costly as you desire. Many of the activities suggested here will not entail large amounts of cash. Be creative and use things you have to get the ideas of healthy families and healthy lifestyle across to others in your family. This get together should be about the ideas you share with each other, the goal you want to achieve, the healthy changes you intend to make, and ways you plan to support one another. Many free materials are available from websites on the internet. Some things can be printed directly from the computer and others can be ordered. Do some searching for topics that you are of special interest. Links for some websites are provided on the *Diabetes: A Family Matter* website <www.diabetesfamily.net>. If you choose to order things, be sure to allow adequate time.

Activity Duration:

The activity could take place at a party, over dinner, or at an all day special family event. It could even take place via a website, email, or family letter. Because making changes is not easy and most of us cannot do it quickly, you might want to be persistent and plan as series of things that you could do over a period of time to assist your family members become more aware of health risks and ways to improve their health.

Materials needed:

Some different ideas are suggested for this activity. You can choose one or several of



them. You may want to add some ideas of your own. You know what best fits your family. Based upon what you decide, then you will need to make a list of things you might need to obtain or do. Planning ahead for the get together will assist you to make it a success.

Background Ideas:

Families in the Appalachian region often get together for Sunday dinners, backyard picnics, and celebrations of all kinds. These times are generally filled with food, talk, laughter, fun, and sometimes gathering around the TV to watch a football or basketball game or other event. Some families have members that are great musicians or storytellers and their family get together usually includes some singing along or listening. Families also come together at the times when loved ones are critically ill, an emergency occurs, a life-threatening diagnosis is made, or when a death occurs. Whenever family events happen, members are expected to be present and those missing are always noted. Family is important! We care about one another and want to spend time together as often as we can.

Some family members may have special roles to play. If it is a dinner event, then grandma might be expected to bring her yeast rolls and Aunt Clara her delicious 3-layer chocolate cake. Uncle Larry might always man the barbecue for picnics. A few of the cousins can be counted on to bring the board games and get others involved in playing. Perhaps the family get together always takes place at mom and dad's house. Families all have ways they get together with one another. Family traditions are important to members and have special meanings. While we can get awfully angry

at times with each other or have horrible disagreements, the love and connections we have with one another are deep. We stand by each other through the lean times and the good times.

Families have stories. Members tell stories about each other. Often a great amount of laughter or pain is linked with some of these stories. Every family get together is full of chatter and at least some bits of foolishness! We talk about the news, politics, religion, the neighbors, and each other! We tell stories about family members no longer with us, ones who cannot be present, and friends or neighbors we all know. We lecture, criticize, and encourage one another. We recollect the past, grumble about the present, and share hopes for the future. A family get together provides a time and space where we can just be who we are. It can be an ideal place where everyone knows us and loves us for who we are. While not every family get together turns out to be memorable, the history of these times together etches memories that we carry throughout our lives.

It is interesting that a family get together can often be a time when we share concerns about illness and disease with one another. When a member gets sick, we are concerned. We gather around and do our best to give support, even when we do not understand anything about the disease or what our family member really needs. We just know we care and want to be present. We are eager to do anything we can do. In times of illness, we help with transportation, pick up prescriptions, sit at bedsides, watch children, and assist with household chores. We assist with our time and money. When a family member dies,



we gather together and celebrate all of the wonderful memories we share. In times of illness, disease, and death, family members are drawn together.

It is notable that most family members do not spend much time talking with one another about health and wellness. We often tell one another to be careful. We teach children personal hygiene. We have concerns about food safety. We encourage each other to take medicine or follow the doctor's orders. However, many of us seldom have conversations with our family members about ways to promote good health or prevent disease. In fact, often when we do try to do some of these things, we get accused of nagging!

So, the main point of this family activity is to think about fun ways that we can encourage family members to consider their health, find ways to become more physically active, and choose to eat more nutritious foods. In order to get these points across to your family members you will likely need to be quite creative. The ideas will need to be fun and appeal to their personal values. Everyone knows that it is not easy to change behaviors. So, before any change is ever going to happen, family members will need to know why you think it is important and why they should want to make changes.

When confronted with ideas about wellness and healthy lifestyles, many people agree that this is what they should be doing. In fact, many people know things they should do, but continue to do things that are less healthy. So the challenge is how do we get our family members from 'know they need to change' to actually 'making the changes.'

Now every family has a few naysayers. In fact, it can often be the person who needs to make some changes says something like, "I 'm just not going to worry about it, when my time comes, I am ready to go." It is likely that someone will pipe up with, "Don't be telling me what I need! I am as healthy as a horse." Or some other family member might say something like, "If I wanted your advice, I would ask for it!" Of course, every family has someone that might say, "How can you be telling us what we should do when you haven't ever taken good care of yourself." It is just about this point that an all out family feud breaks out! Lots of wild chatter! Some people getting angry. Others stomp off or just ignore everything being said.

So, if you plan to talk with your family members about health matters, you might need to do some thoughtful planning about the best ways to approach them. Springing a surprise after you get them there may not get you very far! Letting them know ahead of time something about what you are planning can sort of get them somewhat prepared before they arrive. They will be expecting something even if they do not know what! A second thing is to let them know ahead of time that what you plan to talk with them about is REALLY important to you. If you are the mother or grandparent, you have most likely earned enough respect that they will listen. If you are not one of those people then it might serve you well to get these women and elders on your side.

Health Promoting Ideas for the Family:

One of the first things to do is make a list of illnesses and diseases that are ones you have seen repeated in your relatives over



several generations. Most families have some diseases that they are at high risk to experience. These diseases might be things such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke, or cancer. While these diseases may not be completely preventable in every case, the good news is that they can be delayed if not prevented completely! Lives filled with routine physical activity and healthy eating will help. In fact, daily healthy actions mean we not only prevent or delay one disease, but many of them. We can take active roles in caring for ourselves. Families can work on these things together and it is NEVER too late to begin!

Health means that we are physically, emotionally, and spiritually well. Some people call this wellness or holistic health. Health is about being whole in our bodies, minds, and spirits. When this happens we increase our chances for long lives that allow us to fulfill our goals and enjoy all of our days. Most people, if they live long enough, are likely to have several chronic illnesses before they die. However, across the hills, mountains, and valleys of the Appalachian region, people are getting sick with chronic illnesses way to young and many are living lives of poor quality and dying way too soon. We can change this picture by taking small steps toward good health EVERY day of our life.

Once you identify things that your family members are at risk for, then you want to arm yourself with the facts. You need to know what causes the disease, what can be done to prevent it, how to delay it from starting, ways you can manage it and still live a good life, and how to prevent other serious problems or complications. If you have 2 or even 3 diseases that your family members could be at high risk, you might

notice that the things you can do to lower the risks of most chronic illnesses are the same. For example, getting physically active, eating a balanced diet, watching your weight, quitting tobacco use, managing your stress, using alcohol in moderation, using prescription drugs correctly, and regular physical check-ups. Go to the internet or the library and get the facts! You may want to get copies of information to give your family members. Many things can be found for free. Just allow plenty of time to order these materials if you want to give them to others at a family reunion. If you are not sure how to go about searching, check with your local librarian or see if there is someone locally offering computer classes.

Too often we say things like, "Everyone in my family gets diabetes, nothing I can do about it!" WRONG! You want to be able to tell those that you love and care about that there is plenty that can be done to prevent disease. We need to find good ways to tell our family members that we can live long healthy lives and then show them how this can be done. Maybe you have been trying to improve your health already. If so, then you need to be able to share with family members ways they can give you support. They need to know what they can do to help. You need to tell them. Family members cannot read our minds. Sometimes family members tempt us to do things that are not healthy for us. They do not mean for these things to hurt us. For example, when a family member has diabetes, someone might say, "Oh, come on; get you a piece of that cake. You know it is your favorite." We need to be able to tell others that not giving in to the temptation is a hard thing, but increases risk for health problems. While making allowances at



special times is okay, when it becomes a habit then we are going to have trouble.

Family Activities:

The ideas presented here can be changed to fit your family needs. So, please read things over and find ways to use your imagination and adapt them. The important thing is to first give people the health knowledge they need. Second, show them ways to prevent diabetes and other chronic illnesses that might be high risks for your family. Third, be an example yourself. Fourth, encourage, support, and empower. **DO NOT NAG!!!!**

Finally, **MAKE IT FUN!!!!** Family members will not take part unless you can find ways to bring lots of humor into it. Making this fun instead of work will encourage others to take part.

Idea #1:

A first idea is the development of a *Family Health Contract*. Contracts need to be something that everyone agrees upon. The contract can state a health goal that each family member agrees to achieve. It is okay to start with smaller goals. Members can always aim for bigger goals later. Each family member needs to state a specific health goal they want to achieve. Goals should not be things you are already doing. Goals need to be things that are highly possible to reach, but things that will also take some effort. Goals should pertain to things like increasing levels of physical activity, increasing the numbers of fruits and vegetables eaten daily, reducing the size of portion, or quitting the use of tobacco or at least reducing the use. Reaching goals should involve thinking about the specific things you will do to reach them and result in improvement in some aspect of your health. Finally you

must set a date for when the goals will be achieved.

Rules for Goal Setting for Family Contract:

- Goal should be a specific thing you want to achieve.
- Goal cannot be something you are already doing.
- Goal should be something you think you can achieve.
- Goal should be something you do every day or at least 5 times a week.
- Goal must pertain to something that impacts your health.
- Goal should identify the exact steps you will take to reach the goal (start with small steps to reach a bigger goal).
- Goal should state what you are going to do, when you will do it, how long you will do it.
- Goal should have an exact date for when it will be reached.

Remember, the goal is what you want to reach by a set date. It is not what you start out doing. For example, if you really never get any extra exercise, but you are physically capable and want to increase your physical activity. A goal might be to walk 10,000 steps at least 5 days a week. You might want to get a pedometer to measure these steps, wear it every day, and keep a weekly record of what you do. Now, at first you might only walk 1,800 steps in a day. But as the weeks go by you can add more steps each day. So, by the date to meet the goal 2-3 months later you will hopefully attain your goal. Several members of the family might want to choose the same goal and do it together. Other members will have different goals.



The *Family Health Contract* should state the goal for each family member. The first step in getting to the contract is having everyone write their goals. Include even the very young and the very old in this family contract. Parents may need to assist children. After everyone has written the goal, then each person needs to share the goal with the entire family. Family members should then assist one another to make sure everyone's goal has all of the needed components. Finally the family needs to decide upon a date for when the goals must be met. Have each member complete a form something like what is below, make changes that you think best fit your family.

Individual Goal for Family Health Contract

Name:

YOUR GOAL:

What you will do to meet the goal:

How often you will do it:

How long will you do it or how much:

Date the goal WILL be met:

Signature:

In order to make the *Family Health Contract* more interesting to everyone you might try a few other things. For example, create a rather official looking document that describes the seriousness of member participation. Having each person sign the document is important. If you can get

someone to witness the signatures that is not "officially" a family member then this could make it feel more authentic. Be sure to attach all of the individual goals to the contract and put it in a place for safe keeping.

Now here are a few things you might want to consider adding to the contract. If the family includes extended family members, then you might want to have each family work as a unit. Getting people working together as a team seems to make us more accountable. You might want people to keep records of their activities to turn in on the date the goal must be met. For many people writing things down helps keep us on track.

If you have several families, then you might want to have a rule in the contract that any family that does not reach their goal must pay! The payment can go into a get healthy fund for something to purchase for the family (maybe something like *Dance Dance Revolution* or a *Wii Fitness*). The family needs to decide what the "fine" might be. Or if someone does not reach the goal, maybe they have to do a job that involves some extra work like clean the basement or rake the leaves. Add whatever kinds of things you want to the contract.

You will want to be sure that everyone is encouraged to take part. Find ways to make them responsible for themselves and accountable to each other. Send family members weekly reminders or encouraging notes or emails can help keep people on-track. Assign this task to different family members to keep everyone involved. Have a phone chain or use a family buddy system. What kinds of things will work best



to keep all of your family members focused on meeting their goals?

The contract needs to state the date for when the goals must be met. Of course this must be a special family get together! Make this event a time for everyone to enjoy. Create some fun awards for people. Plan a healthy menu. You might even want to plan some special activities for this event. Have the get together at a place where everyone can be active. You may want to have a special ceremony or even a story-telling time where people each share how they met or did not meet their goal. Have someone video the time and make copies for everyone so that they can remember what happened at this special get together. As this event comes to a close, the family should decide whether they want to set new goals and repeat this activity or if they want to try something different. Have some ideas ready to share. Getting healthy is important, but staying healthy is even more important. Find some ways to keep your family focused on healthy living.

Idea #2

This idea is based upon the program called *The Biggest Loser*. You may have watched it on TV or at least have heard about it. This idea could be a great challenge if there are several family members that would like to reduce their dress or pant size! Everyone can participate. Even if some members do not need to lose much weight, they may be interested in re-shaping their body a bit and getting some bulges under control. This could be a competition among some family members or between several parts of an extended family. Many different ways to consider this idea exist. For example, you might want to aim for a total number of pounds lost in the entire family. This can

take the stress off individuals, but make this a shared experience.

Based upon the number of people involved, you will need to calculate how big a family weight loss you want to achieve. Maybe the family as a whole wants to lose 20, 40, or even 75 pounds in the next two months. Everyone weighs in and weights are recorded and put in a safe place. Keep in mind that the scale does not always measure everything. If you are getting more active and turning fat into muscle, you can find that your weight stays the same but your body is being re-shaped. Give yourself time. Much extra weight was gained over a much longer time than two months.

A date is set for the final weigh-in. Take some photographs so you will have a before and after view of everyone. Post these pictures in a place where family can see them. Maybe you want to create a home bulletin board. Have everyone wear the same clothes for the second photo. Then it becomes everyone's responsibility to cheer each other on. Perhaps having weekly weigh-ins with reports given to a single recorder can help keep everyone motivated. It is important that family members feel that they are contributing to a family goal and sense the need to encourage and support one another in the efforts. You and your family may have some other ideas for making this better fit your needs.

A variation of this activity could occur by looking for the loss in inches instead of pounds. Some family members might be more interested in toning up or 'getting in shape.' This generally means that people need to get active and eat some healthier foods and portion sizes. So maybe your



family is aiming to lose 25, 50, or even 70 inches in the next two months. The number of inches will need to be based upon the number of people involved and the likelihood of inches lost. For example, if there are young children in the family that are of appropriate weight and size then you may not expect them to lose inches. However, if a younger child is overweight and not very active, then you might expect that they can lose several inches just like an adult might. One way to estimate the inches to lose would be to measure everyone and then make an estimation of how many inches each person might lose if they worked really hard over the next two months. When you do the measurements, be sure to do waist, buttocks, thighs, and upper arms.

A key to this activity will be having family members support every one. Keep in mind that there could be some weeks when individuals fail to reach the inch lost hoped for. Be sure to have a good measuring tape because you want to be able to capture even those $\frac{1}{4}$ " losses. Celebrate the successes every week. As explained above, you will want to set a date for when the final weigh-in or inch-in will occur. Plan this as a big event. Be creative and make it fun. Be sure the camera is ready to record the great results. Find ways to encourage each other. Become family cheer leaders! You may want to decide on a big reward for the family if the goal is met. Plan something active and fun that you can do together and everyone will enjoy.

Idea #3

This idea is entitled the *Sticky Note Campaign*. The goal of this activity is to make everyone in the family more conscious about ways to get healthy. In

families, we sometimes find it hard to tell each other things without having them taken by others in negative ways. While we might intend to be helpful and caring, things too often do not come across as positive. When health topics come up, some people become defensive. Often when we know we are not doing the things we really want or need to do, we become angry when someone suggests what we should do. While family members care much about each other, it seems that we can also get awfully frustrated with one another.

The truth is, we all want to be healthy! Family households are places where we can learn about health and practice those behaviors. Somehow, families have gotten off track when it comes to health and too many of us are not healthy and our daily habits are only making things worse. Many of us sit too much and eat too many of the wrong foods. Changing these routines really needs to start in our homes and be supported by our family members. If we cannot find ways to help each other, then who is ever going to be able to help us?

So, the *Sticky Note Campaign* is a way we can communicate with each other without directly confronting each other and being critical. Before the campaign begins you will need to gather some information about good health that you can share with your family members. A number of websites are listed at the end of this *Toolkit Activity* and many more can be located through the internet. You want to share things about the importance of good health and suggest a few ways that this could be done. Even more important, you want to challenge all family members to find new ways to help one another be healthy. The *Sticky Note*



Campaign is a way to focus on ways to increase physical activity and healthy eating, but can include anything else that can improve over-all health of all family members. While this activity will likely be most effective for all the people that live in a single household, you might be creative and find ways to include other family members also.

In order to conduct this family campaign, you will need to purchase or obtain packets of two different colors of sticky notes. You will need enough to give everyone a stack. If you do not want to spend money on them, then just get two different colors of paper and cut the pages into pieces about the size of a sticky note. You should be able to supply more when family members run out! It does not matter what colors you use.

Each color stands for something different. One color, let's say yellow, is to be used for suggestions and the other, let's say pink, is to recognize good things being done. Here is the plan! First, you must plan to give three pink sticky notes to each yellow note. Be sure to tell everyone that they must be as positive as they can with all of the sticky notes. The idea is to help everyone get healthy and never to make someone mad.

The yellow notes are to be suggestions for a particular family member about things they could try to do to improve their health. This could be a suggestion such as brush your teeth after every meal, try eating a piece of fruit instead of chips, let's take a walk together, we have watched enough TV let's go outside and play, washing my car would help us both, etc. The idea is to suggest a healthy activity. It is okay to suggest things that you can do together, in fact this can be a great way to give support to one another.

Now, for every yellow note, you must give three pink ones before you can give another yellow one. The pink sticky notes are for all the healthy things you notice each other doing. This is a way to support and encourage each other. Examples of things you might write on the pink sticky notes are things such as thanks for running the sweeper, good job watching your portion size, glad to see you parking further away from the stores and getting some extra walking, those trips up and down stairs are making you healthy, great choices at the grocery store choosing some fresh fruit, etc. In families, we need to recognize the positives and assist in areas where others need our support. The idea is to become more aware of what each other are doing. The notes will also make members more conscious of the good and positive choices they are making.

Try to do the *Sticky Note Campaign* for 30 or 60 days and see what happens. At the end of the time set have a family discussion about what has happened and how family members think things are going. See if you think you are getting healthier? Have you changed some habits and started to do some new things that make you feel better? As a family decide whether you want to continue the campaign a while longer or whether you think that you can continue to encourage one another without using the notes. Of course, even after the campaign is over, it is still okay to go ahead and slip some notes to people. Health really is a family matter!

Idea #4

This idea pertains to family dinners and healthy eating. We live in a world where we all seem to always be in a hurry. Too often



in our hurry to rush off and do something else, our meals become less healthy and we have little family time together. In fact, many families never or hardly ever sit down together at a meal. So this get together is really about your family and the members that live in your house, but you might find ways to expand it and include others. The purpose of this activity is to bring family together and provide a way to learn more together about the foods we eat, nutrition, and food preparation. Cooking is not just for mothers, everyone can get involved!

This activity is about having at least one night a week when the family has a sit-down meal together. This meal should be one that everyone is involved from the menu planning, shopping, preparation, eating, to the clean-up. The rule for the meal is that it must be a balanced and nutritious based upon the food pyramid <<http://www.mypyramid.gov>>. Each meal should include a new fruit or vegetable not usually eaten in most family meals.

Cookbooks or recipes from the internet must be obtained and a new way to prepare the food must be tried. All family members need to be involved in deciding the menu and selecting the recipes. Then everyone must assist with the preparation. Make this a time to talk about health and the value of eating a balanced diet.

As you plan to eat together, it might be interesting to have one family member each week be responsible for sharing something interesting about at least one of the foods you are eating. Another choice could be to assign one of the foods to each family member and make them responsible for learning and teaching others this new information. This will take a little bit of research before the dinner. Members could

tell about such things as where a food item came from and what was involved in getting it to your table, what nutrients are in some of the foods being eaten at the meal, identify something about the culture of other people that eat one of the foods in your meal, or discuss different ways a food can be prepared and eaten in other parts of the country or world. You could make you special weekly meal an international dinner, one that challenges you to learn more about the bigger world where you live. You might even consider going back and getting some old family cookbooks and learning more about what it was like living in an earlier time. Having a conversation around the foods will help you appreciate more what

Ways to Extend the Activity:

Ask your grandparents or other seniors what kinds of games they played as children and try to play some of them. Get them to play with you!

Go to the Diabetes: A Family Matter website <www.familydiabetes.net> and take a look at the *Toolkit Activities* listed there. You will likely find many other things that you might want to try as part of a family get together.

Some other Ideas to Consider:

- Buy everyone a hula hoop and get active, search on the internet and find many fun, healthy, and inexpensive things to do.
- Have an outdoor treasure or scavenger hunt.
- Give gifts that encourage physical activity like new walking or running shoes, jump ropes, exercise or dance tapes as gifts, inline skates, etc.



- Have family contests using traditional exercises such as doing sit-ups, jumping jacks, toe touches, knee-to-elbow, or even push-ups.
- Play beach volleyball, create a lawn chair version.
- Plan children's birthday parties with either indoor or outdoor physical activity as the focus.

Final Word:

If you use this **Homemaker Club Activity** in your community, please be sure to go to the *Diabetes: A Family Matter* website <www.diabetesfamily.net> and share with others what worked and what did not work. A place on the **Communicate Section** of the website will be available for sharing your ideas. If you have a website that pertains to this activity, please post the link to the website so that others can take a look.

Resource from the Internet:

Adult Energy Needs and BMI Calculator

<http://www.bcm.edu/cnrc/caloriesneed.htm>

Knowing your body's daily calorie needs can be an important first step in adopting a realistic diet and physical activity plan that can help you attain and maintain a healthy weight.

Be Active : CDC website

<http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/consumer/beactive.htm>

Physical activity is a key factor in leading a healthy lifestyle and reducing chronic illnesses. People of all ages who are inactive can improve their health and well-being by becoming active on a regular basis.

Dietary Guidelines for Americans

<http://www.health.gov/DietaryGuidelines/>

These Guidelines provide authoritative advice for people two years and older about how good dietary habits can promote health and reduce risk for major chronic diseases. They serve as the basis for Federal food and nutrition education programs.

Eat Right: CDC website

<http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/consumer/eatright.htm>

Learning how to eat right is an important part of controlling diabetes. You will find tips on healthy eating, weight control, recipes, and special diets at this website.

Fatsecret

<http://www.fatsecret.com/>

This is a free online diet, nutrition and weight loss social network community that uses the collective contributions of its members to generate practical and motivating information to help you make better decisions to achieve your goals.

Fruits and Veggies Matter (CDC)

<http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.gov/>

Here you will find many things that will help you learn more about the National Fruit & Vegetable Program and help you encourage others to eat a colorful variety of fruits and vegetables.

My Food Advisor

<http://www.diabetes.org/food-nutrition-lifestyle/nutrition/my-food-advisor.jsp>

At this website you will find a unique calorie and carbohydrate counting tool that can help with diabetes management and nutrition. Tracking what you eat can help manage your weight and diabetes. This can help you avoid complications. Learn about different types of food and make meal planning fun and easy.



My Pyramid (USDA)

<http://www.mypyramid.gov/>

MyPyramid offers personalized eating plans, interactive tools to help you plan and assess your food choices, and advice to help you: Make smart choices from every food group. Find your balance between food and physical activity. Get the most nutrition out of your calories. Stay within your daily calorie needs.

My Pyramid Tracker (USDA)

<http://www.mypyramidtracker.gov/>

MyPyramid Tracker is an online dietary and physical activity assessment tool that provides information on your diet quality, physical activity status, related nutrition messages, and links to nutrient and physical activity information. The Food Calories/Energy Balance feature automatically calculates your energy balance by subtracting the energy you expend from physical activity from your food calories/energy intake. Use of this tool helps you better understand your energy balance status and enhances the link between good nutrition and regular physical activity. Keep track of your energy balance history and view it up to one year. MyPyramid Tracker translates the principles of the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and other nutrition standards developed by the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services.

Small Step (DHHS)

<http://www.smallstep.gov/>

This site has great tips about getting healthy. It's hard to stay in shape these days. Our entire lives are built around driving cars, eating on the run, and spending our free time relaxing in front of the TV or computer. All of these factors may contribute to the fact that 2 out of every 3

Americans are now overweight or obese -- defined as having a body mass index over 25.

We Can

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/>

"Ways to Enhance Children's Activity & Nutrition" is a national program designed for families and communities to help children maintain a healthy weight. The program focuses on *three* important behaviors: *improved* food choices, *increased* physical activity and *reduced* screen time.