

NOTE TO GROWN-UPS

The Be the Boss of Your Body series is about kids taking charge of their own health, but that doesn't mean they don't need help from adults. This is especially true with diet and fitness. Parents and other caring adults are essential in helping children develop good eating habits and be physically fit. Eating well is a family affair. Young children are dependent on the food you offer them, and older children may adopt your eating habits. Whether the kids you're working with are overweight, underweight, or of normal weight, they need encouragement, positive reinforcement, love, and support while working to take control of their health.

Some of the most important things you can do to help are:

- ★^b Read this book so you better understand what your child is doing.
- ★^b Be available and supportive.
- ★^b Listen to what your child tells you about how he or she feels, and try to understand.
- ★^b Give your child as much control as possible to manage his or her diet and exercise.
- ★^b Give praise and positive reinforcement for using the B³ skills; celebrate successes.
- ★^b Encourage your child to continue participating in school and favorite activities.
- ★^b Engage in self-care skills yourself.

Making Good Food and Fitness Decisions

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the National Association of Nurse Practitioners have set guidelines and recommendations to help parents support their children in making good choices about eating and activity. Discuss nutrition with your child's healthcare provider, and start monitoring children's food and fitness when they are quite young. If you suspect your child has an eating disorder, contact your family doctor or another healthcare professional. For general pediatric health information, check out the AAP's Healthy Children Web site (www.healthychildren.org).

Recommendations for Eating

- ★**b** Model healthy eating with the foods you choose and the portions you eat and serve.
- ★**b** Teach children about appropriate portion sizes of all foods (see page 48).
- ★**b** Do not promote “diets.”
- ★**b** Allow children to decide when they are full rather than insisting they clean their plates.
- ★**b** Offer a diet consisting of all nutrients and food groups (see pages 35–36).
- ★**b** Limit consumption of energy-dense (high calorie) food.
- ★**b** Limit the amount of sugar-sweetened beverages such as soda and juice.
- ★**b** Make sure kids get five or more servings of fruits and vegetables daily.
- ★**b** Eat a breakfast every day.
- ★**b** Limit meals outside of the home, especially at fast-food restaurants.
- ★**b** Regularly eat together as a family.

Recommendations for Shopping

- ★^b Include children in planning meals, buying groceries, and making meals.
- ★^b Make lists together of healthy snacks that are appealing.
- ★^b Don't shop when you're hungry.
- ★^b Leave junk food at the store. Keep healthy snacks on hand.

Recommendations for Physical Activity

- ★^b Have a goal of 30–60 minutes of moderate to intense activity daily. *Remember that this time can be accumulated throughout the day rather than all at once.*
- ★^b Promote physical activity at school and in childcare settings.
- ★^b Be active with children. Allow them choices in deciding what to do. Go for a family walk once or twice a week.
- ★^b Provide play equipment that increases physical activity.

Recommendations for Screen Time

- ★^b Make time in front of TV, computer, and video game screens contingent on exercise: “If you play basketball for one hour, you can have screen time.”
- ★^b Limit screen time to two or fewer hours per day.
- ★^b Don't allow TV viewing for children less than 2 years of age.
- ★^b Do not put a TV in a child's bedroom.

Recommendations for Supporting Children's Self-Esteem

- ★^b Support their efforts to make healthy choices in eating and activity by praising successes and good choices, by providing resources they need, and by helping them when they need it.
- ★^b Encourage and empathize. Don't criticize their eating, how they look, or their exercise.
- ★^b Get professional help when you need it.
- ★^b Get the entire family to participate in healthy eating.

Evidence suggests that people who engage in self-care activities live healthier, more productive lives. Teaching kids to look at their health from a holistic perspective—considering body, mind, and spirit—and teaching them self-care skills sets the stage for lifelong wellness and balance. By encouraging and helping your children with the skills in this book, and modeling the skills yourself, you can give them the confidence to uncover the wealth of talent and strength they possess and encourage them to actively participate in their health.

These skills can make a positive difference in *your* life, too!

Please remember that this book is not intended as a replacement for professional medical or psychological consultation when they are needed. Children and adolescents who are having serious health problems or new onset of symptoms should be evaluated by their primary care provider. Problems that are acute, severe, and/or associated with other symptoms such as fever, nausea, or rash need to be evaluated and treated by a qualified healthcare professional.