



## November is PTA Healthy Lifestyles Month!

Visit [PTA.org](http://PTA.org) for more info.

Throughout this issue you will find tips on creating a healthy lifestyle for your family.

### Healthy Kids Are Happy Kids

Parents are forever telling children to "eat their vegetables," but PTA parents know that raising healthy children requires more than a simple reminder at the dinner table. Considering the constant temptation of junk food and the popularity of sedentary activities like playing video games and surfing the Web, we need to make a special (and ongoing) effort to encourage good diets and regular exercise in our children.

Improving children's health is a top priority during my presidency, and that includes everything from fighting the rise of childhood obesity to ensuring that recess remains in schools. Healthy children are happy children who are ready to learn, which is why PTA is promoting Healthy Lifestyles all November long.

Over the course of the month, hundreds of PTAs across the country will be hosting health-related events, some of which are being funded by \$500 Healthy Lifestyles Awards from the PTA national organization. You can visit [www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org) for tips on planning your own events and a downloadable PTA Healthy Lifestyles parent's guide.

We may not be able to monitor our kids' consumption of sugar and media every minute of the day, but what we can do is much more important. We can make a commitment to instilling in children the value of a healthy lifestyle — a gift that will reward them for a lifetime.

Jan Harp Domene  
PTA National President

#### Healthy Tip #1

There doesn't have to be a trade-off between playing video games and getting physical exercise. Consider buying "exergames" for your child's video game system, which require players to move around to advance in the game. Alternatively, institute a family rule that each player has to do five jumping jacks for each level he or she beats in a video game.

### Create a Healthier School Environment for Your Child

Have you ever been frustrated by your child's options in the school cafeteria?

Have you ever wished that your child had more opportunities for physical activity during the school day?

Did you know that most school districts are required by federal law to have policies that address nutrition and physical activity?

Read the full article [here](#).

## Wondering what nutrition standards school districts should have in their wellness policies?

Earlier this year, the Institute of Medicine released a report making recommendations about the availability, sale, content, and consumption of foods at school, with special attention on the "competitive" foods and beverages students obtain outside of the traditional school lunch. The report, *Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools: Leading the Way Toward Healthier Youth*, concluded that opportunities for competitive foods should be limited, but if competitive foods are available, they should consist of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and nonfat or low-fat milk and dairy products, consistent with the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Read more about the Institute of Medicine report [here](#).

## Great Healthy Lifestyles Tips

As part of Healthy Lifestyles month, PTA sponsored grants for local PTA units to promote their own activities! Below are great examples of what other PTAs across the nation are doing!

### Home Fitness Calendar

Create a monthly calendar with your kids to keep track of family physical activities and healthy eating.

Activities should be at least 20 minutes long and might include walking, biking, rollerblading, playground fun, dance lessons or

soccer practice, etc. Healthy meals and snacks can also be noted in order to create awareness of the food choices we make each day. A fun family "reward" could be offered at the end of the month!

—Submitted by Cooleemee Elementary PTA, North Carolina

### Family Play Day

Head to your child's school to share lunch and recess time with your child. This is a great break in your day and a time to celebrate positive food choices while encouraging physical activity. —

Submitted by Goforth Elementary PTA, Texas

### Plant a Vegetable Garden

Planting crops at your child's school would tie in all academic areas including history, social studies, math, and science. This activity would also

give kids a sense of responsibility, as they take charge in determining the garden layout, which vegetables to grow and daily upkeep. Reward their hard work with a "Harvest Celebration" where everyone can feast off the yield.

—Submitted by Washington Elementary PTA, California

### Healthy Tip #2

Reading and doing homework for long periods of time can be difficult. During finals and other stressful school periods, remind your kids to set aside time for a run or a friendly game of basketball. The time spent away from the books will pay off in the long run. Research shows that when kids get proper exercise, they are better able to learn and achieve.

### Healthy Tip #3

Creating a healthy meal can seem overwhelming at times. Don't be afraid to ask for help from your kids—even the smallest ones! Cooking with your kids is a great way to talk about nutrition and the different choices that go into creating a balanced meal.



#### Healthy Tip #4

Learning to ride a bike is a rite of passage in any child's life. When it comes time for your child's first bike, be sure to give them a proper helmet, pads, and tips for safe riding.

#### Recess Walkers Program

Help your child's school initiate an indoor walking program during the winter. Students can walk inside the school for 30 minutes, two days a week. Adding a pedometer to the mix can increase motivation and enthusiasm. Students can be rewarded after they reach a specific increment.

—Submitted by James H. Johnson Elementary PTA, New Jersey

For a list of the winners of the Healthy Lifestyles grants, visit our [website](#).

#### Healthy Tip #5

Varsity and intramural sports are a great way for kids to be active. One way to ensure that students stick with sports is to be a supportive parent. Attend your child's sporting events whenever possible, and don't criticize his or her performance or the coach.

#### Parents Can Help Eliminate Obesity in Schools

Childhood obesity is one of our nation's leading health threats. Today, about 12 million kids are overweight, and another 12 million are at risk for becoming overweight. The obesity epidemic is clearly taking its toll, as more and more kids are developing

conditions and diseases they typically might not see until adulthood—such as high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol, and type-2 diabetes.

Some experts believe that if childhood obesity rates continue to increase, the current generation could become the first in American history to live shorter lives than their parents.

Read the full article [here](#).



#### Healthy Tip #6

Children (especially younger ones) tend to eat what is given to them, so be sure to stock the snack cabinet with things that will nurture their growing bodies.

#### PTA Briefs

#### What Are You Thankful For?

As we approach Thanksgiving, many of us get preoccupied with cooking the perfect turkey, welcoming out-of-town relatives, or reviewing early gift lists carefully prepared by

our young ones. With all of the frantic holiday preparations going on, it's nice to take time out to reflect on the real meaning of this season. *PTA Parent* would like to know what *you* and your family are thankful for. Whether your son or daughter is thankful for their latest report card featuring a hard-earned "A" in math, or you are thankful for just spending time with your family on a Sunday afternoon—let us know! Please e-mail\* the PTA Reader

#### Healthy Tip #7

Ethnic restaurants can be a healthier alternative to traditional American fare—and an adventure for the whole family. When deciding where to eat out, think of places you might not have tried before, in neighborhoods you may not have been to.



Panel at [readerpanel@pta.org](mailto:readerpanel@pta.org) and let us know what you and your family are thankful for. We will feature your thoughts in the next issue of PTA Parent.

In your e-mail, please send us the following by **Tuesday, November 13:**

- Name of the person submitting the response,
- Age (if a student),
- The name, town and state of your PTA (if applicable),
- What you are thankful for, and
- Your e-mail address.

**Healthy Tip #8**  
Don't forget about breakfast. Eating breakfast can help students stay focused at school throughout the morning. Breakfast can help parents stay focused too, and help them stay away from non-nutritious snacks before lunchtime.

Digital photos are MORE than welcomed! Please submit a caption (description, names of individuals in photo) with your photo.

*\*By sending an e-mail, you'll be granting PTA the right to publish your response (which may be edited for grammar, length, and/or clarity) and/or photo.*

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### Are Men Involved in Your School and PTA? What Roles Do They Play?

Research shows that parent involvement is a vital component in helping children to reach their full potential. Fathers and other male family members are just as important as mothers and female family members in encouraging their children to succeed. Are men an active part of your school and PTA? If so, how do they contribute to the school and PTA? If not, why not? What might you do to encourage them to participate?

If your response is selected for publication in the February-March 2008 issue of *Our Children* magazine, PTA will send you a \$25 Barnes & Noble gift card. (Concise responses are more likely to be published.) **Deadline for submission: Monday, November 12, 2007.**

**Healthy Tip #9**  
You might be surprised at the difference eliminating soda from your diet can make. Flavored waters, 100% juices, and tea can be great alternatives.

When submitting your response to [forum@pta.org](mailto:forum@pta.org), please include

- Your name,
- The name and town of your PTA,
- Your position in your PTA, and
- Your home mailing address so we can send you a gift card if your submission is published.

By sending an e-mail, you'll be granting PTA the right to publish your response, which may be edited for grammar, length, and/or clarity.

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**Healthy Tip #10**  
When cooking and baking, substitute low-fat or nonfat options whenever possible. Especially when the ingredient is one of

## Your Benefits as a National PTA Member

many, or a minor part of the dish, your family may not even notice.

You are entitled to PTA national member benefits because you are a member of a dynamic organization. Most often, you will be notified of these benefits by e-mail, the most efficient way to notify numerous members at one time. You may not be interested in every offering you receive so you can delete the e-mail when it arrives. However, selecting unsubscribe will prevent you from receiving future offers that are of interest to you.

### Healthy Lifestyles #11

Make sure everyone in your family gets enough sleep. You will all feel better and have more energy for exercise and other activities.

PTA tries to present a variety of benefits throughout the year since we know all of our members do not have the same interests. We do ask you to unsubscribe for any of your family PTA members less than 18 years of age since it is not our intention to solicit to

children. You may contact the national organization at [info@pta.org](mailto:info@pta.org) with suggestions for member benefits or to tell us how you have enjoyed the current benefit offerings. Your comments may be used in a future *Contributors Connection* e-newsletter.



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## 100 Ways to Help Your Child and School Succeed

There are many ways that you can help your child succeed! Here are a few that you can do this week:

- Learn about school and district policies and practices that affect children. (*Conozca las políticas y prácticas de la escuela y el distrito inherentes a los niños.* )
- Help organize and/or participate in community health fairs. (*Ayude a organizar y/o participe en ferias comunitarias en materia de salud.* )

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## In the News

- [Important lessons go unlearned when children don't spend enough hours unplugged](#)
- [Smart News Makes it Easy for Parents to Find the 'Good Stuff' on TV for Kids](#)
- [Poll: 67% of adults say schools should distribute birth control](#)

### Healthy Tip #12

Buy everyone in your family a reusable water bottle. Let family members pick out their own colors, or even decorate their bottles. Be sure to keep the bottles full and chilled so they are ready to go when you leave the house. Being hydrated and having water on hand can make it less tempting to stop for sugary sodas when you're away from home.