

3

Did you know that the family meal has a significant impact on the nutritional quality of children's diets? Growing school-age children need to eat three meals a day and have healthy snacks to achieve energy balance: eating and drinking (energy in) to provide the right amount of fuel our bodies need for healthy growth, everyday living and physical activity (energy out). Try these simple, practical ideas at home to achieve energy balance and make healthy easier for you and your family.

- **Make time for breakfast.** Start every day off right with a healthy breakfast. Research suggests that skipping meals, particularly breakfast, can lead to weight gain. Include at least three food groups such as whole grains, fruit and nonfat/low-fat dairy or lean protein to start your family going strong. Studies have also found that students who eat a healthy breakfast are more prepared to learn, more likely to attend school and better able to take advantage of educational opportunities.
- **Do it together.** Experts recommend encouraging family meals in which parents and children eat together. When families eat together, children tend to eat more fruits, vegetables and milk and have less fried foods and soft drinks. For families with busy evenings, breakfast provides a great alternative for a shared family meal. Include the whole family in meal planning and preparation. Rotate favorite meals and age-appropriate duties such as salad chef or table setter.
- **Make it easy for you!** Prepare what you can ahead of time. Cut up veggies like carrots and zucchini at the beginning of the week. Store them in air tight containers or plastic bags in the fridge. Add them to salads, soups, stews, casseroles or cook and serve as side dishes with the week's meals.

nrgBalance 12345! highlights five recommended behaviors for maintaining good health and provides simple, practical tips for helping families achieve energy balance every day.

- 1 One or more hours of physical activity each day
- 2 Two or less hours of screen time each day
- 3 Three balanced meals each day
- 4 Four or more cups of water or low/no-calorie beverages each day
- 5 Five servings of fruits and veggies each day

For more ideas on how to achieve energy balance as a family, visit www.nrgbalance.org.