

# Food & Exercise

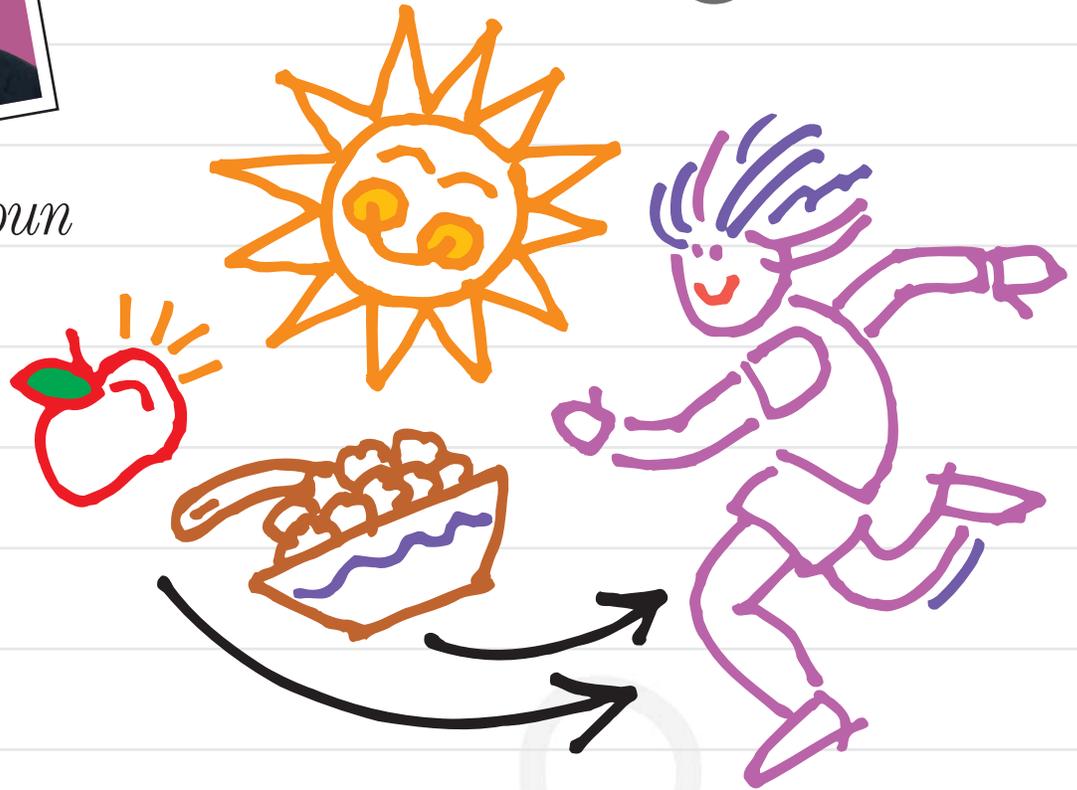


## Food and Exercise

“Being in shape is fundamental to winning.”



— Coach Calhoun



Consistent physical conditioning and proper nutrition are prerequisites for success as an athlete. Beating obesity in children through healthier diet and regular physical activity is just as basic to our success as a community.

## Moment of Victory

All children eat nutritiously and lead active, healthy lives.



## Team Stats That Don't Cut It

- One in four Connecticut children is obese or overweight; by adulthood, the rate rises to one in two.
- Being overweight as a result of poor health habits puts children and teens at greater risk for developing Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke, liver disease, asthma and depression.
- Each year in Connecticut an estimated \$856 million (4.3 percent) of adult medical expenses are obesity-related costs.
- In a 2005 survey, 11.2 percent of Connecticut high school students were obese and 14.7 percent were overweight.



## Game Situation

In meeting the challenge to live a healthy lifestyle, Connecticut's children have the deck partially stacked against them. Just three decades ago, many more children could walk to school, enjoy recess and physical education class, play late at the local park, and eat healthy home-cooked meals.

Today, most children have little chance of walking to school. They are more likely to live a distance from school and ride a bus to school. For those who live close to school, the walk often includes fast-moving traffic, no sidewalks or the risk of crime. After school, television, computer, and video games compete for attention, overshadowing physical activity. Add the pressures of food marketing and busy parents who often don't have time to cook and it becomes pretty challenging for a young person to eat well.

So it's little surprise that thousands of Connecticut children are overweight or obese.

I don't have a safe place to exercise because there are a lot of places where gangs hang out or drug dealers.

## Good nutrition and physical activity promote student achievement and health.

When children's basic food and fitness needs are met, children have the cognitive energy to learn and achieve. Strong academic performance is more likely when young people eat well and exercise. Children with poor nutritional intake have lower arithmetic scores and are more likely to repeat a grade.

How can I make those choices when all I have offered to me is junk food?

Schools offering intensive physical activity programs see positive effects on academic achievement even when time is taken from the academic day for this purpose. Students in these programs are better able to concentrate in class. They show improved math, reading and writing scores and are less disruptive at school.

## Childhood obesity is unhealthy for our economy.

Obese children typically become obese adults. Individuals diagnosed with diabetes before age 20 have a life span 15 to 27 years shorter than non-diabetic Americans.

The National Institutes of Health have estimated that increases in childhood obesity will cost families, businesses, and governments nearly \$100 billion per year in future health costs alone.

## “Full Court Press” Game Plan

**Change the rules and you change the game.**

Childhood obesity is a very preventable condition. We know what causes it and why it’s on the rise. Here’s our very focused game plan for victory.

### What parents and youth can do

- Replace unhealthy snacks, sodas and fast food with healthy snacks and meals. Cook and eat meals together.
- Visit state and local parks on a regular basis. Take advantage of the Department of Environmental Protection’s *No Child Left Inside* program.
- Urge your school to take advantage of the Connecticut Healthy Food Certification which offers additional funds to schools that offer healthy food to students.

### What schools can do

- Participate in the Connecticut Healthy Food Certification program.
- Sign up for the Connecticut Farm-to-School Program to bring fresh foods directly from the farm to your students.
- Strengthen your school wellness plan by following the state Department of Education’s guidelines for school nutrition and physical activity.
- Invite Captain 5 A Day from the Connecticut Department of Public Health to visit your students. The Captain brings information, games, videos and ideas about eating fresh fruits and veggies five times each day, all in fun interactive presentations.
- Offer extra-curricular physical activities for students. Collaborate with community recreation department during out-of-school hours.

## What communities can do

- Implement a community plan using the National League of Cities' Combating Childhood Obesity action kit for municipal officials and the Connecticut Association of Directors of Health's Healthy Eating Active Living Resource Toolkit for communities.
- Create partnerships with schools. Municipal leaders can work with school district officials to develop and implement school wellness plans. Leaders can also build public support for nutritional improvements within schools and reach agreements with school leaders to expand access to athletic fields and recreational facilities.
- Make the most of out-of-school time. Town officials can urge the adoption of quality standards that ensure nutritious snacks or meals and daily physical activity are part of after-school, summer and other out-of-school programs, including parks and recreation programs.
- Utilize parks and recreation. Offer free or low-cost parks and recreation programs; build recreation facilities for the whole family; establish and maintain walking trails, bike paths or pedestrian malls.
- Reshape the physical environment. Town governments play a central role in local land use decisions. Leaders can use their authority to create pedestrian-friendly zoning codes, adopt traffic calming strategies to enhance child safety; and ensure the safety and accessibility of walking and biking routes.
- Support farmer's markets in your community.
- Take advantage of federal dollars through the Connecticut Department of Transportation to create safe routes to schools for students.



*Develop a community walking program based on the innovative NorWALKers initiative in Norwalk. This community created neighborhood walking routes to encourage children and families to get outside and get moving.*

## What policy leaders can do

- Make childhood obesity a chief focus of Connecticut's health agenda.
- Establish a chronic disease reporting system to provide statewide population-based data on childhood obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and tobacco use. This data reporting would reveal the magnitude of the childhood obesity epidemic in Connecticut, as well as enable monitoring of several key health trends over time.
- Provide ongoing funding for innovative community initiatives to build healthy habits among children and families.
- Support the work of the Connecticut Childhood Obesity Council.
- Support physical education programs in all public schools, year round.



Dr. Johnnie Lee,  
Stamford health director:  
"Just changing it within the school day is not going to solve the problem," Lee said. "Access to healthier foods has to be a community approach. It also has to be a family approach."

Yes, the good foods are grains, poultry, seafood, fruits and veggies and the bads are fat, oil and candy.

I'd like to see a bike trail in my community where you can rent bikes.

I'd like to see more gyms, walkathons, a public swimming pool and strawberry patches.

**Success is a matter of attitude.**

## Read More about Food and Exercise

### **The Children's Sentinel Nutrition Assessment Program (C-SNAP)**

Headquartered at the Boston Medical Center, C-SNAP is a nonpartisan organization that conducts research on how to promote children's health and well-being. Read its reports at [www.c-snap.org](http://www.c-snap.org) or call (617) 638-5850.

### **The Connecticut Department of Education**

The Nutrition Education section of the department's website ([www.ct.gov/sde](http://www.ct.gov/sde)) offers a host of publications. Among them: the "Action Guide for School Nutrition and Physical Activity Policies," which helps school districts adopt policies that promote healthy eating and physical activity. It also contains information for schools' participation in the Connecticut Healthy Food Certification Program. Nutrition Education Coordinator Susan Fiore can be contacted at (860) 807-2075 or [susan.fiore@ct.gov](mailto:susan.fiore@ct.gov).

### **The Connecticut Department of Public Health**

The department's Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Prevention Program offers "Connecticut's Plan for Health Promotion," along with other materials. Visit the DPH website at [www.ct.gov/dph](http://www.ct.gov/dph) or call the nutrition program at (860) 509-8251.

DPH is also home to Captain 5 A Day, a superhero who encourages children to eat fruits and vegetables (at least five a day!) and to exercise every day. Visit his website at [www.captain5aday.org](http://www.captain5aday.org) or call his helpers at (860) 509-7197.

### **The Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection**

As the state agency that oversees public parks,

forests and waterways, DEP has launched No Child Left Inside, an initiative to encourage families to enjoy these resources. For more information, visit [www.nochildleftinside.org](http://www.nochildleftinside.org) or call the DEP's main phone number, (860) 424-3000.

### **The Connecticut Department of Agriculture**

DOAG operates the Connecticut Farm-to-School Program. Its aim: to incorporate fresh, Connecticut-grown fruits and vegetables into school cafeteria meals and snacks. For more information, visit the department's website at [www.ct.gov/doag](http://www.ct.gov/doag) or contact Jane M. Slupecki at (860) 713-2588.

### **The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**

Through a program called We Can!, this federal agency gives parents and caregivers practical tools for helping children stay at a healthy weight. Visit the We Can! website at [www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/) or call (301) 592-8573 (TTY: 240-629-3255).

### **The Connecticut Association of Directors of Health**

As an organization that represents municipal health directors, the association has put together the "Healthy Eating, Active Living Toolkit," a resource for towns and cities. Visit the CADH website at [www.cadh.org](http://www.cadh.org) or call (860) 727-9874.

### **The Connecticut Commission on Children**

Visit the Childhood Obesity section of the Commission's website, at [www.cga.ct.gov/coc/obesity.htm](http://www.cga.ct.gov/coc/obesity.htm), or call (860) 240-0290 for materials.

# NOTES

