The tips at right are based on strategies and approaches used by nutrition, health and public health professionals who work with children, youth and families. These professionals shared their ideas for helping youth make better food choices in keeping with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans as part of an Action for Healthy Kids research project that involved over 1,400 respondents nationwide.

Please refer any child with a special dietary need or health condition to an appropriate health care professional.

### Tips for Parents and Caregivers

**Parents are role models.** If you want your kids to drink their milk, you have to drink yours, too!

**Eat family meals.** Kids are more likely to eat more healthful foods at the family dinner table.

**Stop the clean plate club.** The meal isn’t done when the plate is clean; it is when the belly tells the brain that it’s full.

**Provide variety.** Expose kids to a variety of low-fat and fat-free dairy, fruits, vegetables and whole grains.

**Food as fuel.** Help kids think of their stomachs as gas tanks. Don’t overflow your gas tank... or your belly!

**Start young.** Likes and dislikes are formed early. Teach kids about healthful foods from infancy.

**Encourage the “one-bite taste.”** Don’t force a child to eat. Taste for new foods occurs over time.

**Use your tools.** Learn how to read food labels, MyPyramid charts, shopping lists and recipes.

**Set TV limits.** Allow no more than two hours a day of screen time, including computer and video games.

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**Portion distortion.** Teach youth about realistic food portions using age-appropriate serving sizes.

**Garden to table.** Teach kids where their food comes from. Visit a farm! Plant a garden!

**Get their hands dirty.** Involve kids in food planning, selection, preparation and cooking.

**Make it real.** Show kids how much sugar is in soda or an energy drink by measuring it with sugar cubes.

**Discourage dieting.** Explain to kids that not eating “junk” food is a change in habits, not a diet.