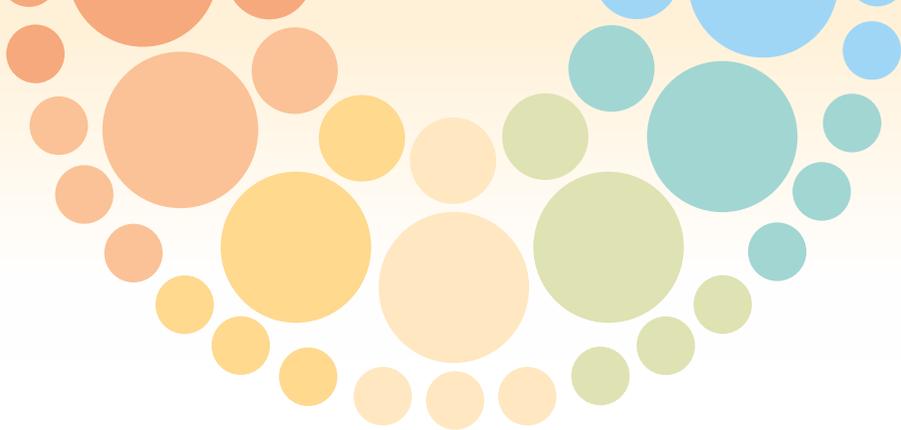


# StartSmart Parent Guide





**“In the family ...  
where there is love,  
there is health.”**



# Foreword

## Loving our children – Where to start?

Nowadays, many parents make early plans for the future of their children. They spend a lot of time, effort and money on choosing schools, foreign language classes or hobby groups for their children, wishing to give their children a quality and comfortable life in the future. Everything that parents do is out of love. Yet, how could children embrace a bright future if they are not in good health? To ensure that children can contribute to society, enjoy their lives and live happily after growing up, it is important for parents to teach them ways of self-care to stay healthy at an early age.

In Hong Kong, the problem of childhood obesity is prevalent. The proportion of primary one students being overweight/obese reflects that the problem has already arisen in the pre-primary stage. A lot of research has shown that overweight children are more likely to become obese adults with increased risks of developing chronic diseases (including hypertension, diabetes and heart diseases) and certain types of cancer.

Caring and responsible parents should not only create a happy, healthy environment for their children, but also act as role models. In doing so, children are able to develop a healthy lifestyle to protect themselves against diseases related to poor dietary habits or sedentary lifestyles. In the long run, they can avoid unnecessary pain and suffering in adulthood.

In view of the above, the Department of Health, with the support of various Government departments, education sectors and stakeholders in child health, launched the “StartSmart@school.hk” Campaign and compiled the first edition of *StartSmart Parent Guide* in 2012. Updated in 2020, this version is the third revised edition of the Guide. It aims to help parents and caregivers create a healthy home environment for children aged between 2 and 6 to establish a regular lifestyle and develop habits of healthy eating and regular physical activity.

We hope that parents and caregivers can make use of this Guide to create supportive environments for young children, so that our next generation, with the support of family, school and our community, can enjoy good health and unleash their greatest potentials.

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Part 1 Online version



## Part 1

# Principles of Healthy Eating

- I. Recommended food intake
- II. Choices for different food groups
- III. "3 less" cooking

# I. Recommended food intake

Early childhood is an important period for growth and development. With a balanced diet, children can stay healthy and develop good dietary habits, thus laying a solid foundation for their future health.

When providing food for them, parents should consider whether the “quality” and “quantity” of food can meet the development needs of children. The “Healthy Eating Food Pyramid”(Figure 1) is a useful guide for this purpose!

Figure 1 Healthy Eating Food Pyramid



## 1. “Serving” and “quantity”

The term “serving” is a unit used in nutritional science. It describes the amount of food one needs from each food group every day.

The definition of a “serving” of food varies among different food groups, e.g. 1 serving of dairy products is about 1 glass (240 ml) of low-fat milk and 1 serving of fruit is about 1 piece of medium-sized apple. Please refer to Table 1, Table 2 and “Food Exchange List” poster for details.

Once you know the child’s daily serving requirements for each food group, you can work out the “quantity” of different food they should have every day. For example, N to K1 children should have 8 - 12 servings of grains every day, i.e. about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  -  $2\frac{1}{2}$  bowls of rice (1 bowl = 5 tablespoons) or 4 - 6 slices of crustless bread.



Food Exchange List (poster)

Table 1 Recommended daily food intake for children

| Food group   | Daily intake                      |                     | Examples of one serving  |
|--|-----------------------------------|---------------------|--|
|  | N to K1                           | K2 to K3            |  |
| Grains   | 8 - 12 servings                   | 12 - 15 servings    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <math>\frac{1}{5}</math> bowl or 1 tablespoon of white rice</li> <li>• <math>\frac{1}{3}</math> bowl of macaroni (cooked)</li> <li>• <math>\frac{1}{2}</math> slice of crustless bread</li> <li>• 1 small-sized potato</li> </ul>   |
| Vegetables   | At least 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ servings | At least 2 servings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <math>\frac{1}{2}</math> bowl of cooked vegetables</li> <li>• 1 bowl of uncooked vegetables</li> </ul>  |
| Fruits   | At least 1 serving                | At least 2 servings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 pieces of small-sized fruit (e.g. kiwi fruit, plum)</li> <li>• 1 piece of medium-sized fruit (e.g. orange, apple)</li> <li>• <math>\frac{1}{2}</math> piece of large-sized fruit (e.g. banana, grapefruit)</li> <li>• <math>\frac{1}{2}</math> bowl of cut-up fruit or mini-sized fruit (e.g. watermelon, grapes)</li> <li>• 1 tablespoon of dried fruits</li> <li>• <math>\frac{3}{4}</math> glass (approx. 180ml) of pure fruit juice*</li> </ul> |
| Dairy products   | Approx. 2 servings                | Approx. 2 servings  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 glass of low-fat milk</li> <li>• 1 glass of calcium-fortified, low-sugar soymilk</li> <li>• 2 slices of low-fat cheese (approx. 20g per slice)</li> <li>• <math>\frac{2}{3}</math> cup (approx. 150ml) of low-fat yoghurt</li> </ul>  |
| Meat, fish, egg and alternatives                       | 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ - 2 servings      | 2 - 3 servings      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 30g of cooked beef, pork, chicken and fish (size of a table tennis ball)</li> <li>• 1 medium-sized egg (approx. 50g)</li> <li>• 1 piece of silky tofu</li> <li>• <math>\frac{1}{2}</math> bowl of dry beans</li> </ul>  |
| Fat & oil (recommended amount of oil used for cooking) | Max. 6 servings                   | Max. 6 servings     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 teaspoon of vegetable oil</li> <li>• 2 teaspoons of peanut butter</li> <li>• 1 tablespoon of salad dressing</li> </ul>  |

\* $\frac{3}{4}$  glass (approx. 180ml) or more of pure fruit juice a day would only count as 1 serving of fruit.

Table 2 Unit conversion table

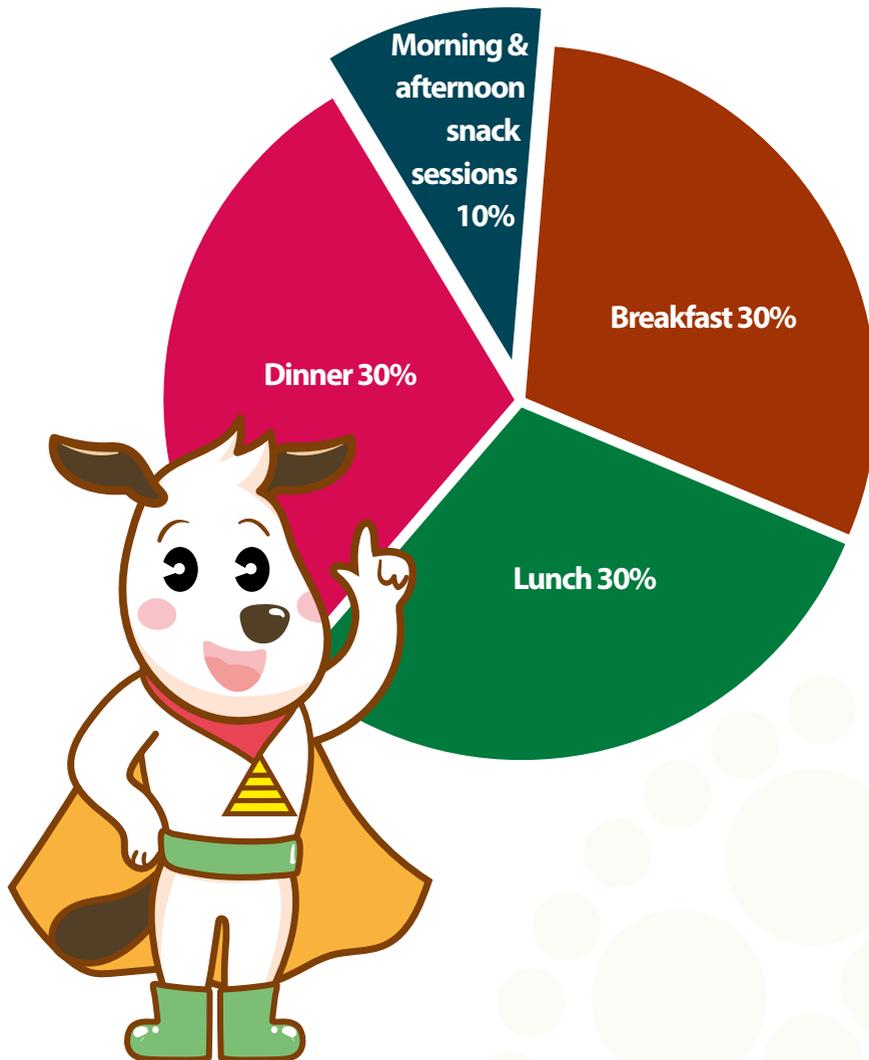
| 1. Weight    |   |              |                       |
|--------------|---|--------------|-----------------------|
| 1 oz         | ≈ | 30 g         |                       |
| 1 lb         | = | 454 g        |                       |
| 1 kg         | = | 2.2 lb       | ≈ 35 oz               |
| 1 catty      | = | 16 taels     | ≈ 640 g               |
| 1 tael       | ≈ | 40 g         |                       |
| 2. Volume    |   |              |                       |
| 1 teaspoon   | ≈ | 5 ml         |                       |
| 1 tablespoon | ≈ | 15 ml        |                       |
| 1 glass      | ≈ | 240 ml       |                       |
| 1 bowl       | = | 250 - 300 ml |                       |
| 1 oz         | ≈ | 30 ml        | ≈ $\frac{1}{8}$ glass |
| 1 L          | = | 1000 ml      |                       |



## 2. Recommended ratio of energy and nutrients in each daily meal

Each main meal (i.e. breakfast, lunch and dinner) should provide children with about 30% of their daily energy and nutritional needs, while the remaining 10% should be provided in snack sessions (Figure 2).

Figure 2 Ratio of energy and nutrients in each daily meal

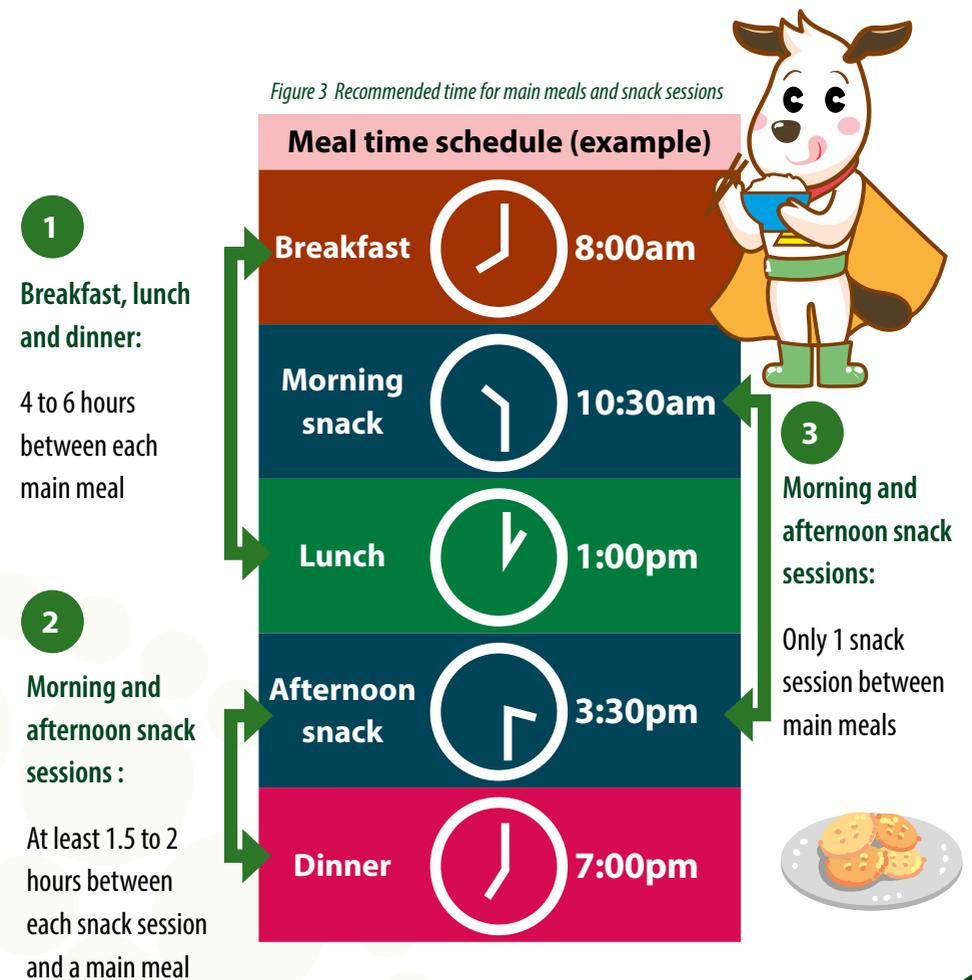


## 3. Recommended meal time throughout the day

The frequency of eating should be appropriate. Eating too infrequently will reduce the children's intake of energy and nutrients and affect their growth. Eating too frequently may lead to excessive food and energy intake, contributing to obesity and increasing the risk of tooth decay.

Please refer to the recommendations ①, ② and ③ in Figure 3 when scheduling meal time for children.

Figure 3 Recommended time for main meals and snack sessions



## II. Choices for different food groups

Apart from quantity and timing of meals, the nutritional value of food also directly affects the health of children. Therefore, please note the following when making food choices:

### Choose



- ✓ Food that is "3 low 1 high" (i.e. low-fat, low-sodium (salt), low-sugar and high-dietary fibre)
- ✓ Mainly natural and fresh food
- ✓ Lean meat and skinless poultry

### Avoid



- ✗ Processed food with added fat/oil, salt or sugar (e.g. ready-made meatballs, dim sum, pickled vegetables, canned food, salted fish, salted duck egg, Chinese preserved meat) and sauces
- ✗ Deep-fried food (e.g. fried bean curd stick, fried bean curd puff, fish tofu, fried fish cake, E-fu noodle)
- ✗ Meat with high fat or high cholesterol content (e.g. pork belly, poultry with skin, chicken paws, offal)
- ✗ Drinks with artificial sweeteners (i.e. sugar substitutes) and caffeine (e.g. tea, coffee)

## 1. Grains

### Choose



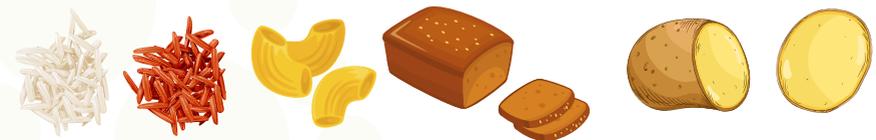
- ✓ Red rice, brown rice, rice with sweet corn, rice with vegetables, white rice
- ✓ Rice vermicelli, macaroni, alphabet pasta, udon, buckwheat noodle
- ✓ Congee, oatmeal
- ✓ Wholemeal bread, multi-grain bread, white bread, dinner roll, raisin bread, steamed bun
- ✓ Potato

### Avoid



- ✗ Fried rice
- ✗ Stir-fried noodle, stir-fried udon, stir-fried rice noodle (ho-fan), E-fu noodle, instant noodle, oily noodle (yau mian), cup noodle
- ✗ Puff pastry or stuffed bun (e.g. egg tart, croissant, pineapple bun, barbecued pork bun, custard bun)
- ✗ Cakes, sandwich biscuits, chocolate biscuits
- ✗ French fries, deep-fried wheat dough stick, French toast

These are high-fat and high-energy foods as a lot of fat/oil is added during the manufacturing/cooking process. One croissant has twice the energy and eight times the fat of a slice of wholemeal bread!





## Smart Tips

Although plain biscuits (e.g. marie biscuits, animal crackers, soda crackers) contain less fat or sugar than sandwich biscuits, wafers or chocolate biscuits, they contain considerable amounts of trans fat and saturated fat. Eating too much will increase the risk of obesity and chronic diseases, such as heart diseases, hypertension and diabetes. **Parents are recommended to limit the frequency of eating and quantity provided to children.**



## Quiz

- Are cakes or biscuits healthy snack choices? How should I choose healthier cakes and biscuits for young children?



Healthy Tips

## 2. Vegetables and fruit

### Choose



- ✓ Fresh vegetables and fruit (including leafy vegetables, mushrooms, squashes, green peas, whole fruit, cut-up fruit)
- ✓ Frozen and dried vegetables and fruit with no added fat/oil, salt or sugar (e.g. sweet corn kernels, mixed vegetables, dried vegetables, dried fruits)

### Avoid



- ✗ Pickled vegetables and fruit (e.g. preserved mustard root, preserved mustard green, mui choy, pickled Chinese cabbage, salted vegetables, fermented cabbage with garlic, pickled cucumber)
- ✗ Canned vegetables and fruit with high fat, high sodium or high sugar
- ✗ Frozen and dried vegetables and fruit with added fat/oil, salt or sugar (e.g. salted and deep-fried seaweed, dried tomato or raisin with added sugar)
- ✗ Vegetable and fruit juice with added salt or sugar





## Smart Tips

Most processed vegetables and fruit (including pickled and canned food) contain added salt (sodium) and sugar. According to the *Dietary Reference Intakes for Chinese (2013 edition)*, Chinese Nutrition Society, **the daily recommended sodium intake for children aged 4 to 6 should be no more than 1200mg (i.e. the sodium content of about  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon of salt or 1 tablespoon of soy sauce).**

For example, the sodium content of  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of canned button mushroom already constitutes 30% of the daily recommended sodium intake for a child. Blanching can only reduce a small amount of sodium content in canned vegetables. Canned peaches have twice the sugar and energy of the fresh ones. Fresh vegetables and fruit are better choice!



## Quiz

- My kids do not like to eat vegetables. What should I do? Should I replace vegetables with fruit?
- Is organic food healthier and more nutritious?



Healthy Tips

## 3. Meat, fish, egg and alternatives

### Choose



- |                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| ✓ Fresh lean meat (e.g. pork, beef) | ✓ Eggs   |
| ✓ Skinless poultry                  | ✓ Dry beans (e.g. soybean, kidney bean, chickpea)  |
| ✓ Fresh and frozen meat and fish    | ✓ Non deep-fried soy products with no added salt (e.g. bean curd, fresh bean curd sheet) |
| ✓ Dried fish with no added salt     | ✓ Dry-roasted plain nuts (e.g. almond, cashew nut)                                       |
| ✓ Canned tuna in spring water       |  |

### Avoid



- ✗ Processed meat or most canned meat (e.g. ham, bacon, sausage, barbecued pork, Chinese preserved sausage, luncheon meat, corned beef, Sichuan pork)
- ✗ Ready-made meatballs or food (e.g. fish ball, beef ball, pork ball, siu-mai, dumplings)
- ✗ Poultry with skin or fatty cuts of meat (e.g. chicken wings and paws, beef brisket, pork jowl, ribs, pork bone, offal)
- ✗ Canned tuna in oil
- ✗ Preserved food (e.g. lime-preserved egg, salted duck egg, salted fish)
- ✗ Soy products with added fat/oil, salt, or sugar (e.g. soy chicken, textured vegetable protein)
- ✗ Deep-fried food (e.g. vegetarian goose, fried bean curd puff, fried bean curd stick, fried fish cakes)
- ✗ Roasted nuts with added salt



## Smart Tips

Most processed meat or meat products are cured or seasoned with fat/oil, salt or sugar. It is difficult to estimate how much and what has been added. Children will take in excessive amounts of fat/oil, salt or sugar unintentionally when they frequently consume these products!

Besides, parents should be cautious that children of a younger age may choke on nuts.



## Quiz

- My kids refuse to eat meat. What should I do?
- What is the function of iron? How to prevent iron deficiency anaemia?
- Can my kids eat eggs every day?
- Is it necessary for young children to eat more meat, fish, eggs and other high-protein foods for growth?



Healthy Tips

## 4. Dairy products

Choose

- ✓ Low-fat or skimmed milk (original flavour)
- ✓ Low-fat cheese
- ✓ Low-fat plain yoghurt
- ✓ Calcium-fortified, low-sugar soymilk

Avoid

- ✗ Full-fat milk, evaporated milk, condensed milk
- ✗ Chocolate milk, fruit-flavoured milk (e.g. strawberry milk, papaya milk)
- ✗ Full-fat cheese
- ✗ Full-fat yoghurt





## Smart Tips

The main difference between full-fat milk and low-fat or skimmed milk lies in their fat content; the content of other nutrients like calcium and protein is similar. Generally speaking, **children aged between 2 and 5 may choose low-fat dairy products while those aged 5 or above may choose skimmed ones.**

Low-fat milk and skimmed milk help children take in an adequate amount of calcium and also prevent excessive intake of energy and saturated fat. This is good for the development of bone and teeth as well as promoting heart health!



## Quiz

- Is "long-boiled" pork bone soup rich in calcium? Does it promote children's bone development?
- My kid has lactose intolerance. What should I do?



Healthy Tips

## 5. Fats and oils

### Choose



- ✓ Vegetable oils (e.g. olive oil, canola oil, corn oil, soybean oil, peanut oil)
- ✓ Margarine, peanut butter or salad dressings with no trans fat

### Avoid



- ✗ Animal fats (e.g. butter, lard, chicken grease, cream)
- ✗ Vegetable oils with high saturated fat (e.g. coconut cream, coconut oil, palm oil)
- ✗ Margarine or peanut butter with trans fat





## Smart Tips

Most animal fats (e.g. butter, lard, cream) and some vegetable oils (e.g. coconut oil, palm oil) are relatively high in saturated fat, while hydrogenated vegetable oil (e.g. margarine) contains trans fat. Both kinds of fat are bad for heart health!

We should not use an excessive amount of vegetable oil even though it is healthier. Remember **each person should not use more than 6 teaspoons of oil for cooking a day!**



## Quiz

- Which cooking oils are healthier than others?
- Are fats good or bad? What is the recommended daily fat intake for young children?



Healthy Tips

## 6. Seasonings

### Choose



- ✓ Natural ingredients, spices or herbs (e.g. onion, mushroom, tomato, orange, lemon, spring onion, garlic, tangerine peel, turmeric, parsley, cinnamon leaf)
- ✓ Tomato paste

### Avoid



- ✗ High-sodium seasonings (e.g. monosodium glutamate, fish sauce, fermented bean curd, red fermented bean curd)
- ✗ Sauces made with canned soup (e.g. mushroom white sauce, cream corn sauce)
- ✗ Ready-made sauces (e.g. seafood sauce, fermented bean sauce, white sauce, ketchup)



**We should limit the use of some commonly used seasonings, e.g. soy sauce and oyster sauce, due to their relatively high sodium content.**





## Smart Tips

Some people like to make sauce with canned soup. However, the sodium content of most canned soups is relatively high. Frequent consumption of these soups will increase the risk of hypertension!

Fresh vegetables such as pumpkin, tomato, spinach and sweet peppers can be used to make yummy and healthy sauces. Please visit the “[Recipe Sharing Platform](#)” (Chinese version only) on the thematic website of the “StartSmart@school.hk” Campaign, where you can find many healthy recipes that feature natural ingredients and herbs. Some examples are braised fish fillet with tomato and kidney beans, cauliflower with crushed garlic, chicken fillet with tomato and onion, and stir-fried meat with organic tomato and green bell pepper. Give these healthy dishes a try!



Recipe Sharing Platform (Chinese version only)



## Quiz

- Is chicken powder healthier than salt? Should salt be replaced with chicken powder when I cook for young children?



Healthy Tips

## III. “3 less” cooking

You can prepare yummy “3 less” dishes by limiting the use of oil, salt, sugar or choosing seasonings with less fat/oil, salt or sugar during the cooking process!

### Less oil

- Limit the use of oil when cooking. **Each person is recommended not to use more than 6 teaspoons of oil for cooking a day.**
- Use low-fat cooking methods, such as steaming, boiling, baking, grilling, stir-frying or pan-frying with little amount of oil.
- Remove skin and visible fat from meat before cooking.
- Use an oil sprayer or an oil container with a smaller opening to control the amount of cooking oil used when cooking.



## Less salt

- Use as little salt as possible. Use a smaller spoon to reduce the amount of salt used.



The daily recommended sodium intake for children aged 4 to 6 should be no more than 1200mg (i.e. the sodium content of about  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon of salt or 1 tablespoon of soy sauce).

- Avoid using monosodium glutamate, chicken powder, ready-made sauces or high-sodium seasonings, e.g. fermented bean curd, red fermented bean curd, seafood sauce, shrimp paste, teriyaki sauce, ketchup, sauces made with canned soup.
- Use natural ingredients, spices or herbs for seasoning, e.g. onion, tomato, mushroom, lemon, orange, ginger, spring onion, garlic, pepper, parsley, cinnamon leaf.
- Use fresh vegetables or fruit for homemade sauce, e.g. tomato sauce, sweet pepper sauce, spinach sauce, pumpkin sauce.
- Use fresh fruit in cooked dishes, e.g. stir-fried meat with dragon fruit, steamed meat patty with apple cubes, stir-fried chicken fillet with fresh pineapple.
- Serve sauce and main dish or grains separately if possible, e.g. oyster sauce or soy sauce for boiled vegetable; white sauce or gravy for spaghetti. Add sauce only bit by bit to the main dish or grains when served.



## Less sugar

- Use less sugar for seasoning, cooking or making homemade sweet soup. Use a smaller spoon to reduce the amount of sugar used.
- The World Health Organization recommends that children's **sugar intake should not exceed 10% of their total energy intake per day.**
- Check whether an ingredient contains sugar (e.g. apple, pear, papaya, dates, raisins) to determine whether extra sugar is needed.



Take a 4-year-old boy who consumes 1300kcal per day as an example. His sugar intake should be less than 32.5g (about 6.5 teaspoons).





Part 2 Online version

If you need some ideas for cooking, you can browse the “**Recipe Sharing Platform**” (Chinese version only) on the thematic website of the “StartSmart@school.hk” Campaign, where you can find many healthy recipes. These ingenious recipes are devised by staff or parents from kindergartens and child care centres and contain dietitians’ tips to give you a better understanding of the nutritional information.



Less Salt for Health  
(infographic factsheet)



Less Sugar for Health  
(infographic factsheet)



Recipe Sharing Platform  
(Chinese version only)



Seasonal Menu



Festive Menu



## Part 2

# Tipson Healthy Eating

- I. Increase intake of vegetables and fruit
- II. Healthy drinks
- III. Healthy snacks and nutrition label
- IV. Food reward
- V. Eating out
- VI. Celebrations
- VII. Family education
- VIII. Home-school co-operation

## I. Increase intake of vegetables and fruit

Parents can create chances for children to come across different types of vegetables and fruit to increase their interest.

- When shopping for vegetables and fruit, you can let your children come along.
- If you cook at home, children can help with simple preparation tasks, such as picking vegetable leaves and mixing salad leaves.
- Preparing dishes with vegetables and fruit of various types and colours helps boost young children's appetite and provide them various nutrients.
- Vegetables and fruit can also be snacks and a substitute for unhealthy snacks. Some examples are vegetable sticks, cherry tomatoes, corns, salad leaves or fruit cups.
- When eating out, remember to choose dishes with vegetables and fruit or order a dish of blanched vegetables or green salad.



### Smart Tips

Note that not all vegetables and fruit are healthy as some processed vegetables and fruit have a large amount of added fat/oil, salt or sugar. Choose fresh vegetables and fruit if possible.



The Benefits of Fruit and Vegetables  
(infographic factsheet)



The Benefits of Fruit and Vegetables  
(video)

## II. Healthy drinks

The Department of Health recommends a **daily intake of at least 4 to 5 glasses (approximately 240 ml each) of fluid for children and water is the best choice for fluid replenishment.** However, many children like a variety of sugar-sweetened drinks that are high in sugar (Figure 4), without being aware that these drinks will lead to excessive intake of sugar.

Excessive intake of sugar can cause tooth decay, while excessive intake of energy can increase the risk of obesity! The World Health Organization recommends that children's sugar intake should not exceed 10% of their total energy intake per day. **Take a 4-year-old boy who consumes 1300kcal per day as an example. His sugar intake should be less than 32.5g (about 6.5 teaspoons).**

### Choose



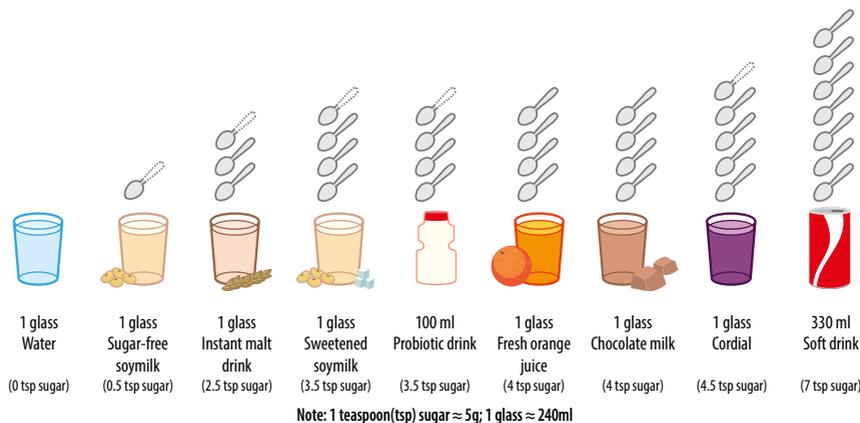
- ✓ Water
- ✓ Low-fat or skimmed milk (original flavour)
- ✓ Calcium-fortified, low-sugar soymilk
- ✓ Clear soup

### Avoid



- ✗ Instant drinks excluding milk powder (e.g. malted drinks, chocolate drinks, fruit juice concentrates)
- ✗ Drinks with added sugar or artificial sweeteners (e.g. soft drinks, fruit juice with added sugar, yoghurt drinks, probiotics drinks, sports drinks, chrysanthemum tea, chocolate milk, fruit-flavoured milk)
- ✗ Drinks with caffeine (e.g. lemon tea, milk tea, milk tea with pearl tapioca, black tea, coffee)

Figure 4 Comparison of sugar content in drinks



## Smart Tips

Pure fruit juice has lower nutritional value than whole fruit. For example, 180ml of pure orange juice contains about twice the energy of an orange and 3 teaspoons of sugar but only  $\frac{1}{6}$  dietary fibre of an orange. Thus, children should not drink pure fruit juice every day. **It is advisable not to drink pure fruit juice more than 2 times a week and not more than 180ml each time!**



## Quiz

- Can my kids consume drinks labelled “sugar free” as much as they like?
- My kids do not like to drink water. What should I do?
- How are sports drinks different from energy drinks?
- Can young children consume energy drinks or other caffeine drinks (e.g. lemon tea and milk tea)?



Healthy Tips

## “Healthy Drinks at School” Charter



To reduce young children’s sugar intake and enhance a school culture conducive to healthy eating, the “StartSmart@school.hk” Campaign launched the “Healthy Drinks at School” Charter in the 2018/19 school year. Kindergartens and child care centres are encouraged to become a signatory of the Charter and make a commitment:

1. to encourage young children to drink water
2. to make healthy drinks available to young children
3. not to provide drinks with added sugar or drinks with a relatively high sugar content
4. not to use food as a reward



“Healthy Drinks at School” Charter



The Fact about Fruit Juice  
(infographic factsheet)



The Fact about Fruit Juice  
(video)



Less Sugar for Health  
(infographic factsheet)



Examples of Healthy Drinks



Soup Recipes for Kids

### III. Healthy snacks and nutrition label

#### 1. Snack choices

Healthy snacks follow the healthy eating principles of “3 low 1 high” (i.e. low-fat, low-sodium, low-sugar and high-dietary fibre). For example, hard-boiled eggs can provide young children with protein, which is essential for their growth. Meanwhile, fruit is a rich source of dietary fibre, vitamins and minerals. Parents should be a role model and eat healthy, nutritious food. To avoid tempting your children, keep unhealthy snacks out of the house.

#### Choose



- ✓ Fresh fruit, dried fruits with no added fat/oil, salt or sugar
- ✓ Fresh vegetables (e.g. cherry tomatoes, pumpkin, cucumber)
- ✓ Wholemeal bread, boiled sweet potato, steamed bun, macaroni
- ✓ Hard-boiled egg, dry-roasted plain nuts

#### Avoid



- ✗ Sweets, chocolate
- ✗ Potato chips, crisps, dried meat floss, jerky, wasabi green peas, fish sausage
- ✗ Desserts (e.g. cake, ice cream, popsicle, jelly candy, ready-made sweet soup)



#### Smart Tips

Some cakes, egg rolls, pastries, crackers and French fries are made with margarine or shortening. Not only are these snacks high in fat, sodium or sugar, but they also contain trans fat, which increases the level of bad cholesterol in our bloodstream and lowers the level of good cholesterol, thereby causing adverse effects on cardiovascular health.

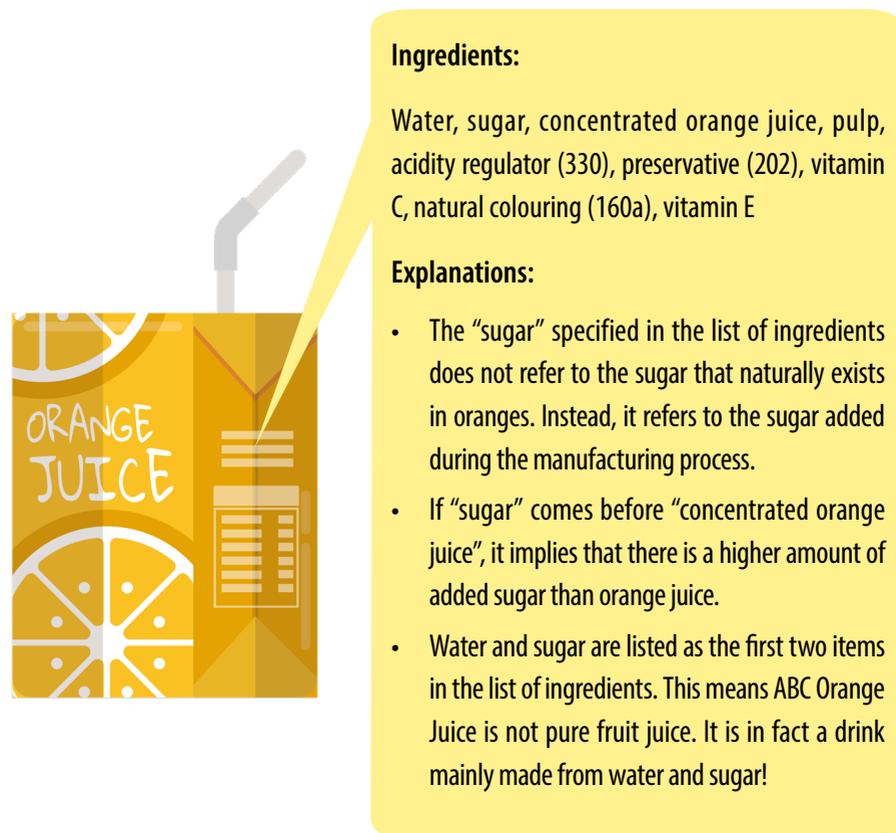
## 2. Choose prepackaged snacks and drinks wisely

To choose healthier prepackaged snacks and drinks for children, read the “ingredient” information and nutrition label.

### List of ingredients

Generally, all ingredients added during the manufacturing process are listed by weight or volume from the most to the least. Such information gives you a quick glimpse into whether the food contains any added fat/oil, salt (sodium), sugar or artificial sweeteners.

Example: ABC Orange Juice



**Ingredients:**  
Water, sugar, concentrated orange juice, pulp, acidity regulator (330), preservative (202), vitamin C, natural colouring (160a), vitamin E

**Explanations:**

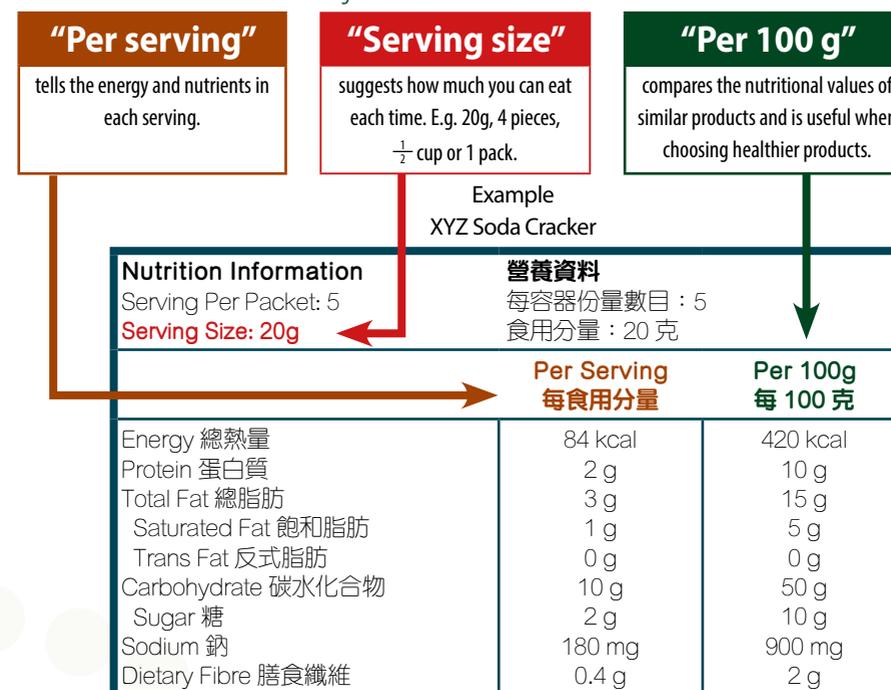
- The “sugar” specified in the list of ingredients does not refer to the sugar that naturally exists in oranges. Instead, it refers to the sugar added during the manufacturing process.
- If “sugar” comes before “concentrated orange juice”, it implies that there is a higher amount of added sugar than orange juice.
- Water and sugar are listed as the first two items in the list of ingredients. This means ABC Orange Juice is not pure fruit juice. It is in fact a drink mainly made from water and sugar!

### Nutrition label

In general, read the nutrition label to see whether the total fat, sodium (salt) and sugar contents meet the criteria of “low fat”, “low sodium” and “low sugar” (Figure 5). If the food is high in “total fat”, “sodium” or “sugar” per 100g, it is advisable to eat less!

For more information, please refer to the Centre for Food Safety website at <https://www.cfs.gov.hk/english/index.html>.

Figure 5 How to read a nutrition label



**“Per serving”**

tells the energy and nutrients in each serving.

**“Serving size”**

suggests how much you can eat each time. E.g. 20g, 4 pieces, ½ cup or 1 pack.

**“Per 100 g”**

compares the nutritional values of similar products and is useful when choosing healthier products.

Example  
XYZ Soda Cracker

|  | Per Serving<br>每食用分量 | Per 100g<br>每 100 克 |
|--|----------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Nutrition Information</b> <b>營養資料</b> |                      |                     |
| Serving Per Packet: 5      每容器份量數目: 5    |                      |                     |
| Serving Size: 20g      食用分量: 20 克        |                      |                     |
| Energy 總熱量                               | 84 kcal              | 420 kcal            |
| Protein 蛋白質                              | 2 g                  | 10 g                |
| Total Fat 總脂肪                            | 3 g                  | 15 g                |
| Saturated Fat 飽和脂肪                       | 1 g                  | 5 g                 |
| Trans Fat 反式脂肪                           | 0 g                  | 0 g                 |
| Carbohydrate 碳水化合物                       | 10 g                 | 50 g                |
| Sugar 糖                                  | 2 g                  | 10 g                |
| Sodium 鈉                                 | 180 mg               | 900 mg              |
| Dietary Fibre 膳食纖維                       | 0.4 g                | 2 g                 |

|                  | What is “low”?               |                               | What is “high”?          |                           |
|------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
|                  | Per 100 g<br>(not exceeding) | Per 100 ml<br>(not exceeding) | Per 100 g<br>(exceeding) | Per 100 ml<br>(exceeding) |
| <b>Total fat</b> | <b>3 g</b>                   | <b>1.5 g</b>                  | <b>20 g</b>              |                           |
| <b>Sugar</b>     | <b>5 g</b>                   |                               | <b>15 g</b>              | <b>7.5 g</b>              |
| <b>Sodium</b>    | <b>120 mg</b>                |                               | <b>600 mg</b>            | <b>300 mg</b>             |

Source of information: Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

## IV. Food reward

Children should be rewarded if they behave well, yet it is not appropriate to give food as a reward. Most foods commonly used as rewards are high in fat, sodium or sugar, e.g. soft drinks, sweets, chocolate and potato chips. Therefore, using food as a reward may:

- encourage children to eat foods high in fat, sodium or sugar, thereby hindering the development of good eating habits and increasing the risk of obesity and other chronic diseases.
- encourage children to eat even without feeling hungry, contrary to the healthy habit of “eating when hungry and stopping when full”.
- encourage children to associate emotions with certain foods, e.g. when they are in a positive or negative mood, they may turn to certain foods either for heightened joy or for comfort.



Parents can use the following alternatives, which do not involve food rewards:

- ✓ giving verbal encouragement “well done!” or giving them a hug.
- ✓ giving out gifts, such as stickers, stamps or stationery.
- ✓ letting children choose their favourite games or activities.
- ✓ giving children extra time for a break, a game or an activity.



Don't Use Food as a Reward  
(infographic factsheet)



Don't Use Food as a Reward  
(video)

## V. Eating out

Many parents often eat out with their children. Bear in mind the following and order healthy dishes to avoid the pitfalls of high fat, high sodium or high sugar:

- Order food based on the “Healthy Eating Food Pyramid”. Grains should take up the largest amount, followed by vegetables. Meat should constitute the least.
- Pay attention to the cooking method: choose steamed, baked, grilled, boiled or stewed dishes.
- Avoid dishes cooked with sauces high in fat or sodium (e.g. white sauce, cream sauce, Portuguese style sauce, curry sauce with coconut milk added, teriyaki sauce). Alternately, request the sauce and grains to be served separately.
- Choose whole grains high in dietary fibre (e.g. red rice, brown rice, multi-grain bread, wholemeal bread, oatmeal). Avoid grains high in fat, e.g. E-fu noodle, instant noodle, oily noodle (yau mian), French fries.
- Avoid processed food, cured food and fatty cuts of meat, e.g. chicken wings and paws, pork bone, ribs, beef briskets, pork belly, pork jowl.
- For desserts, choose fruit or fruit-based ones.
- For drinks, water is the best choice. Avoid drinks with added sugar, artificial sweetener or caffeine (e.g. soft drinks, fruit juice with added sugar, tea, coffee).
- When ordering food, make reasonable requests such as “less oil”, “less salt”, “less sugar”, “sauce to be served separately” or “no sauce”, or have the syrup for drinks and desserts served separately.

When eating out, we can easily savour the “EatSmart Dishes”. Please refer to the “EatSmart Restaurant Star+” thematic website at <https://restaurant.eatsmart.gov.hk>.

## VI. Celebrations

### 1. Healthy birthday party

In children's birthday parties, parents often provide party foods and drinks that are high in fat, sodium or sugar (e.g. cream cake, fried chicken wings, potato chips, sweets, soft drinks). In many cases, families and friends might also give high-fat and high-sugar food as birthday presents, e.g. sweets or chocolate, which are also detrimental to health. Also, children will easily associate these party foods or presents with joyful experience or happiness. Associating emotions with foods high in fat, sodium or sugar in birthday parties will hinder children's development of healthy eating habits in later life. Indeed, such adverse effects will not only affect your children but also those from other families. Parents should thus organise "healthy birthday parties" to foster children's development of a proper attitude eating.

Here are some tips for parents:

- Put the focus of birthday parties on something else other than food, e.g. games, magic shows, costume parties, picnics. Do not simply rely on the provision of party foods to create a fun-filled atmosphere.
- Choose healthier ingredients if food is served. A fun-filled atmosphere can be created with the provision of healthy foods of different colours and shapes.
- Choose plain sponge cake instead of cream cake that is high in fat. You may decorate the sponge cake with fresh fruit for the celebration.
- Do not provide foods and drinks that are high in sugar, e.g. sweets, chocolate, soft drinks, fruit juice with added sugar.
- Give stationery, stickers, storybooks, toys, etc., instead of food as birthday presents.
- For birthday parties in kindergartens or child care centres, parents can communicate with the school and follow the school's healthy eating policy. When bringing food to school for sharing, it is advisable to prepare healthier snacks, e.g. fruit, sushi, sandwich, and use healthy ingredients, e.g. egg, cucumber, chicken fillet, mango.



## Quiz

- Is it alright to offer foods high in fat, sodium and sugar occasionally, such as during birthday parties?



Healthy Tips



## 2. Festival celebrations

It is a tradition to enjoy festive food during festivals in both East and West. Pay attention not to overlook the health of young children during these joyful festivals. **Remember to follow the principles of balanced diet and “3 low 1 high”.**

Here are some tips on selection of foods and drinks during festivals:

- Enjoy festive feasts by following the recommended food portions in the “Healthy Eating Food Pyramid”. Eat more vegetables and less meat. Choose dishes cooked by steaming, poaching, stewing, baking, stir-frying with less oil.
- Limit the amount of festive food intake by serving only a small amount to children. Main meals should not be replaced by festive food.
- Although most festive foods are high in energy, fat, sodium or sugar, there are still many healthier choices.



### Smart Tips

Fresh fruits are diverse in variety, low in energy and rich in dietary fibre. They are good festival gift choices!

## Lunar New Year

### Family Reunion Dinner and Chinese New Year Feast

It is advisable to choose dishes prepared with healthy ingredients using “3 less” cooking methods, no matter you are eating out or at home.

### Chinese New Year Festive Food

Traditional Chinese New Year puddings, sweets and deep-fried snacks are high in fat or sugar. Apart from limiting the amount of snacks, parents can refer to the recommendations below to prepare a healthy Chinese New Year candy box at home.

| Traditional Chinese New Year candy box   | Healthy Chinese New Year candy box   |
|--|--|
| Candied lotus seeds, candied melon, candied lotus root, candied coconut slice, chocolate, fruit-flavoured sweets       | Dried fruits with no added sugar, e.g. dried apricot, raisins, dried longan, dried mango, prune, dried apple |
| Red and black melon seeds  | Seeds with no added fat/oil, salt or sugar, e.g. sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds                              |
| Various festive deep-fried foods, e.g. crispy triangles (yau gok), sesame balls (jin dui), sesame cookies (siu hau jo) | Plain rice cakes and crackers, dry-roasted plain nuts*   |

\*Remark: Parents should be cautious that children of a younger age may choke on nuts.



Chinese New Year Festive Menu

## Mid-Autumn Festival

Traditional mooncakes are made with flour, oil, sugar, salted duck egg yolk and lotus seed paste, which are very high in fat, cholesterol, sugar and energy. One double-yolk mooncake with lotus seed paste contains 840 kcal, which constitutes more than half of the daily energy need of a 4-year-old child. Though a snowy mooncake has lower energy and fat than a traditional mooncake, it is still high in fat and sugar. Parents may give  $\frac{1}{8}$  of a mooncake to young children each time and should avoid eating mooncakes every day.

### Eating tips

- Mid-Autumn Festival seasonal fruits, such as pear, star fruit, pomelo and persimmon, are nutritious and low-energy festive food.
- Glutinous rice balls carry the meaning of “reunion”. Choose those without fillings and serve them with low-sugar sweet soup.
- Mooncakes are a high-fat and high-sugar food. Both young children and adults should not eat too much.
- Choose mini-sized or individually packed mooncakes to limit one’s intake. Choose those with mung bean paste, chestnut paste, fruit paste or low-fat yoghurt fillings.



Mid-Autumn Festival Festive Menu



## Tuen Ng Festival

Parents should choose healthier glutinous rice dumplings and use healthier ingredients to make dumplings with children together.

### Buying glutinous rice dumplings

- Choose smaller ones.
- Those with dry beans, lean meat and mushrooms are healthier.
- Be careful when buying those with red bean paste or other sweet ones as their fillings usually contain lard, which is very high in energy.

### Homemade glutinous rice dumplings

- Choose ingredients that are natural and fulfil the principle of “3 low 1 high”.
- Add high-fibre grains, e.g. pearl barley, oatmeal, black glutinous rice, brown rice as well as dry beans, e.g. red beans, mung beans.
- Use lean meat instead of fatty cuts of meat and preserved meat as fillings. Other choices for fillings include dry beans, dried shiitake mushroom, bamboo shoot, peanut and taro.
- Use healthier vegetable oils instead of lard, which is high in saturated fat.

### When eating

- Reduce the amount of sugar or soy sauce.
- Serve with fresh vegetables and fruit to ensure balanced nutrition.
- Do not overeat to avoid affecting the appetite for main meals.



## Christmas

Parents can refer to the following tips when preparing or ordering a Christmas feast at home or eating out for celebration:

### Eating tips

- Limit the intake of high-fat, deep-fried party foods, e.g. deep-fried shrimp toast, Samosa.
- Avoid fatty cuts of meat such as pork rib and poultry with skin in western meals. Choose lean meat and fish. Reduce the intake of high-sodium Western-style sauces, e.g. black pepper sauce, barbecue sauce.
- Avoid drinks with added sugar, artificial sweeteners or caffeine, e.g. soft drinks, fruit juice, tea, coffee.
- Replace high-fat and high-sugar Western-style desserts, such as cream cake, cheesecake and ice cream with fresh fruit.
- If you receive less healthy gifts such as cookies and chocolate, limit the amount that children are allowed to eat each time. Store these less healthy foods in a place beyond their reach.



Christmas Festive Menu



## Smart Tips

If children eat too much high-energy food during festivals, parents can encourage them to exercise more to burn the extra energy intake.



## VII. Family education

### Be a role model

To help children develop good eating habit at an early age, parents should be a role model in practising healthy eating principles, e.g. having regular meal time, eating more vegetables and fruit, avoiding junk food and picky eating.

### Nutrition education starts at home

Parents can teach their children about food and nutrition in daily life to increase their knowledge of various foods and encourage them to try new foods, so as to gradually improve the problem of picky eating.

- ➔ **Shop together:** Parents can explore new foods in the market or supermarket with their children, teach them the characteristics of different foods (e.g. which ones are vegetables and fruit? Which ones are seasonal foods?), and purchase them as lunch or dinner ingredients to encourage children to eat a wide variety of food.
- ➔ **Cook together:** Let children take care of simple and safe cooking steps, e.g. washing vegetables, scooping seeds with a spoon, cutting bananas into small pieces with a fork, mixing seasonings or ingredients, putting spreads on bread to increase their interest in and acceptance towards different foods. By participating in food preparation, children will surely look forward to eating dishes they helped prepare.
- ➔ **Read together:** Parents should pay more attention to whether the content of stories goes against the principles of healthy eating, and explain and guide their children.
- ➔ **Eat together:** Parents should have meals with their children at home more frequently and remember to create a harmonious and joyful atmosphere, so that children can enjoy the process of eating. There should be no nagging, scolding or tempting either.

There are some points to note during meal time:

- Avoid putting extra seasonings on table, e.g. salt, soy sauce.
- Provide your children with a small portion of food at the beginning of a meal to avoid wastage. This will also enable them to develop a sense of satisfaction after they finish the small portion. Parents may then consider giving more food if necessary. Supplying too much food at one time may bring pressure to children, particularly those with a small appetite.
- Learn good table manners, e.g. turning off the TV, no gobbling, no playing during eating. These help children focus on their meals, avoid experiencing a delay in feeling full, and reduce the chance of overeating, thereby allowing them to cultivate healthy dietary habits.



## Quiz

- Young children eat too slowly or do not swallow food. What should I do?
- My kids like to eat snacks and nothing else. What should I do?



Healthy Tips

## VIII. Home-school co-operation

Children learn healthy eating habits mainly at home and school. With good communication and co-operation between home and school, it is feasible to set a common goal for healthy eating and education for children.

Parents may involve themselves in the following areas:

- Formulate and review the school healthy eating policy.
- Join the school's promotion activities on healthy living with children.
- Read the monthly school menu and let the school know your opinions on the nutritional aspects.
- Work with the school in promoting healthy eating. Bring along healthy snacks for celebrations (e.g. birthday party, Christmas party) and avoid using food as presents.
- Inform the school of any special dietary needs of your children because in case of some health conditions (e.g. food allergy, G6PD deficiency) or religious beliefs.
- Practise healthy eating at home. Create a consistent healthy eating environment at home and school to help young children develop a healthy eating habit.



Part 3 Online version



## Part 3

# Principles of Physical Activity

- I. Physical activity
- II. Sedentary behaviour
- III. Sleeping time

# I. Physical activity

## 1. Physical activity for young children

“Physical activity” refers to any bodily movement supported by our joints and muscles that results in energy expenditure. For young children, physical activity may mean running, jumping, climbing, throwing, walking, singing and dancing, and playing in the park.

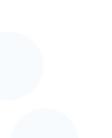
“Physical activity” does not only refer to “exercise”. In fact, “exercise” is a kind of physical activity (Figure 6) and refers to planned and sustained physical activities which require relevant skills to perform. The aim of doing exercise is to strengthen our health-related physical fitness (including body composition, cardiorespiratory endurance, muscular endurance, muscular strength and flexibility).

Figure 6 Physical activity and exercise

| Physical Activity  |  | Exercise  |  |
|--|--|---|--|
| Any bodily movements supported by our joints and muscles that results in energy expenditure            |  | A kind of physical activity   |  |
| Including but not limited to running or playing basketball in a full set of sport gear                 |  | Planned and sustained   |  |
| Examples   |  | Examples  |  |
| Climbing stairs<br> | Playing with sand<br> | Playing football<br> | Swimming<br>      |
| Climbing<br>        | Playing with toys<br> | Dancing<br>          | Rope skipping<br> |

“Physical activity” can be classified by the level of intensity: light, moderate and vigorous intensity. When young children engage in physical activity, parents can discern the level of intensity of physical activity by observing the changes in heart rate and breathing rate and whether they can talk normally (Figure 7).

Figure 7 Physiological signs and common examples of physical activities by intensities

| Know more about intensity levels of physical activities for young children |   |  |  |   |   |  |
|--|---|--|--|---|---|--|
| Intensity  | Physiological signs   | Examples*  |  |   |   |  |
| Light  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Breathing rate and heart rate normal</li> <li>Able to talk normally</li> </ul>   | Playing toys<br>      | Putting on clothes<br>  | Doing household chores<br> | Packing school bag<br> | Slow walking<br>    |
|  |   | Playing slides<br>    | Cycling<br>             | Playing in water<br>       | Swinging<br>           | Brisk walking<br>   |
| Moderate   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Noticeable increase in heart rate and breathing rate</li> <li>Able to talk in short sentences or single words</li> </ul> | Dancing<br>         | Rope skipping<br>     | Swimming<br>             | Playing football<br> | Running<br>       |
|  |   | Climbing stairs<br> | Playing with sand<br> | Playing in water<br>     | Swinging<br>         | Brisk walking<br> |

\* Activities should be appropriate for the young children’s age and physical developmental needs.

## 2. Benefits of physical activity

Physical activity is essential to the whole-person development of young children. For young children, regular physical activity is an important step to achieve physical fitness and an effective way to develop motor skills. It promotes the growth of muscles and bones in preparation for engagement in sports activities in later years. Physical activity can even improve young children's cardiovascular and metabolic health and reduce the accumulation of fat, thereby preventing chronic diseases.

Through physical activity, young children can also learn to relax and handle pressure even at a young age and build self-confidence and self-esteem. These will have positive impact on their learning ability. According to studies, physical activity not only promotes physical health, but is also beneficial for the cognitive development, learning, memory, concentration, language ability and psychological and social development of young children (Figure 8).



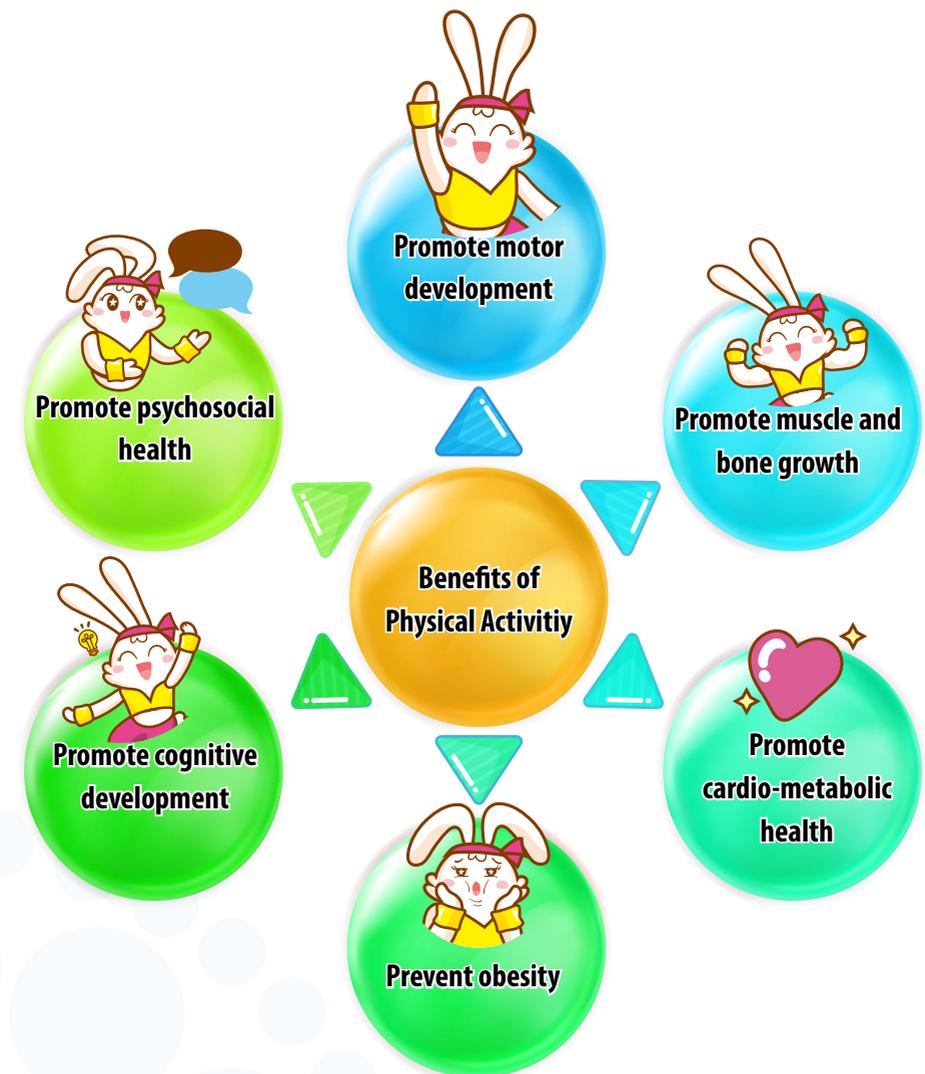
### Quiz

- My kid is very awkward with walking, running and climbing. He stumbles and falls all the time. What should I do?
- Does gymnastics promote all-round physical development for young children?
- Is muscle training important for young children?
- When children sweat heavily, does it mean that they are exercising too vigorously and that they should stop immediately?
- When children play with toys, does it count as physical activity?



Healthy Tips

Figure 8 Benefits of physical activity



### 3. Recommendations on physical activity for young children

To enable young children to enjoy the overall benefits of regular physical activity, parents should encourage young children to develop the habit of regular physical activity since early childhood.

The Department of Health recommends that:

- Young children of 2 years of age: should spend at least 180 minutes in a variety of physical activities of different intensity levels, including moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity spread throughout the day; more is better.
- Young children of 3 to 6 years of age: should spend at least 180 minutes in a variety of physical activities of different intensity levels, including at least 60 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity spread throughout the day; more is better.



#### Smart Tips

As young children grow, it is necessary for them to engage in more physical activities of higher intensity levels so as to promote cardiorespiratory fitness and bone growth. The more physical activity they do, the better it is for their health.

To ensure children's healthy growth and development, parents should arrange an adequate amount of physical activities every day in accordance with their age and developmental needs.

### Tips on raising active kids

Parents are encouraged to find out their children’s physical activity arrangement in kindergartens and child care centres so that they can provide more physical activity opportunities after-school.

To raise an active child, parents may take note of the following tips:

- Parents have to set good examples whilst doing exercise together with their child.
- Reduce the use of strollers. Encourage young children to develop the habit of walking.
- Try to replace motor vehicle travel by walking as much as possible. Encourage older children to walk to school or the park and walk back home. But beware of road safety.
- Encourage children to complete some simple household chores, like tidying up rooms, toys or clothes.
- Schedule extra physical games or activities as a reward for children when they behave well.
- Take children outdoors (e.g. to a park or beach) during holidays.
- Explore and make the best use of facilities and resources in the community. Choose suitable physical activities for children in accordance with their interests and development needs.

### Arrangement of physical activity

It is worth noting that the recommended amount of physical activity is accumulated on a daily basis. In fact, it is not difficult to accumulate the daily recommended amount of physical activity as long as physical activity is incorporated into daily life. Parents can refer to the following example.

|                      |   |   |
|----------------------|---|---|
| <p>Before School</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Let your children take care of their personal hygiene (bathing, brushing their teeth, washing their faces, etc.)</li> <li>• Ask them to dress themselves and put on their own shoes and socks</li> <li>• Do morning exercise together</li> </ul> |    |
| <p>After School</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take your children to the park and play freely</li> <li>• Go grocery shopping together</li> <li>• Teach them to tidy up their toys</li> <li>• Let them help with simple household chores</li> </ul>  |    |
| <p>Night</p>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Let your children to tidy up tableware</li> <li>• Go out for a walk with them after dinner</li> <li>• Let them pack their own schoolbags</li> </ul>  |   |
| <p>Holiday</p>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take your children to a country park</li> <li>• Do any kind of exercise together, such as ball games, swimming and cycling</li> </ul>  |  |

Parents can refer to the above example to adjust children's daily habits to increase their amount of physical activity, or they can arrange various physical activities for their children according to their family schedule.

Active children love interesting and "game-based" physical activities. Parents can add game elements to physical activities or engage in physical activities with their children, such as "Play and Dance", so that children can enjoy the fun. It is also a good way to get young children to actively participate in physical activities and establish a healthy lifestyle.



Play and Dance

Physical Activity for Young Children  
(video)Physical Activity for Young Children  
(infographic factsheet)

## Quiz

- Young children sweat a lot when exercising. Should I give them sports drinks to replenish fluids?
- Some children always play by themselves and refuse to take part in group games. What should parents do?
- How should we arrange physical activity for overweight or obese preschool children?
- Should children with asthma avoid doing exercise?
- Should physical activity be used as a form of punishment if children have behavioural and disciplinary problems?



Healthy Tips

## II. Sedentary behaviour

### 1. Sedentary behaviour of young children

Sedentary behaviour refers to the time spent being physically inactive which is any waking behaviour while in a sitting, reclining or lying posture.

Sedentary time can be divided into "sedentary screen time" (Figure 9) and "non-screen-based sedentary time". "Sedentary screen time" refers to time spent passively watching screen-based entertainment such as watching TV or using a computer, tablet or smartphone. It does not include active screen-based games where physical activity or movement is required.

Excessive "sedentary screen time" not only undermines young children's motivations to explore the outside environments and learn new things, but also takes up the time for physical activity and sleep, which may in turn lead to obesity, inadequate sleep, thereby affecting the development of social skills, visual symptoms and other health problems.

Figure 9 Sedentary screen time



Interactive and education screen activities can be arranged for children. However, such activities should be limited to 1 hour per day and carried out under the guidance of parents.

As for “non-screen-based sedentary time”, it usually refers to time spent sitting but not using screen-based entertainment. For young children, it includes lying on a mat, sitting in a car seat, high chair, pram or stroller with little movement, sitting and listening to a story, reading a book or playing a sedate game.

Figure 10 Non-screen-based sedentary time (examples)



“Interactive non-screen-based activities” are important for young children’s social and cognitive development as well as recreation and relaxation. Examples include reading, storytelling, singing, playing musical instruments, colouring, block building, cutting out, puzzles and games together with parents or caregivers. Thus, parents should pay attention to the quality of sedentary time of young children, and try to accompany their children to participate in activities and give appropriate guidance.

## 2. Benefits of less sedentary activities

Spending less time restrained (such as in prams/strollers, car seats/high chairs or strapped on a caregiver’s back) and not sitting for extended periods of time are beneficial to the health of young children, including lowering the risks of becoming overweight or obese and promoting the growth of muscles.

Some common examples of screen-based sedentary activities among young children are watching TV and videos and playing computer games. Reducing such activities helps not only reduce the risks of fat accumulation and adiposity, but also improve motor and cognitive development and maintain psychosocial health.



### Smart Tips

When young children have to engage in sedentary activities, parents may choose those that could be favourable to their language, cognitive or psychosocial development, such as reading, storytelling, or playing a sedate game with their children.

Figure 11 Interactive non-screen-based activities (example)



### 3. Recommendations on sedentary time

Parents should encourage young children to avoid excessive sedentary activities or sitting time, as well as to develop healthy lifestyle habits since early childhood.

The Department of Health recommends that young children of 2 to 6 years of age:

- **should not be restrained for more than 1 hour at a time** (e.g. in prams/strollers, high chairs, or strapped on a caregiver's back) or sit for extended periods of time.
- engage in reading and storytelling with a parent/caregiver when sedentary.
- **have no more than 1 hour of sedentary screen time a day** (e.g. watching TV or using a computer, tablet computer or smartphone); less is better.
- choose interactive and educative screen activities, which should be carried out under the guidance of parents.

Figure 12 Recommendations on sedentary time



### 4. Tips on cutting down on sedentary screen time

Over-indulging in the use of electronic screen products could pose adverse effects on children's development in many ways. Parents should guide their children to spend time wisely in front of the screen. Here are some tips for reference:

#### Do

- ✓ Be a role model for your children and cut down on screen time.
- ✓ Engage your children in other activities if they ask for screen activities. Try to use "quality time" to replace screen time. Talking, reading, playing and doing physical activities with children can better facilitate their intellectual, language, motor and emotional development.
- ✓ Set up rules and consequences in regulating your children's screen time. Be consistent in carrying out them.
- ✓ Choose the content of the screen activities carefully. Avoid those overloaded with visual images or background audio which may distract children from focusing on the content.
- ✓ Let adults keep electronic screen products.



#### Don't

- ✗ Reward your children with extra screen time or punish them by cutting it down.
- ✗ Leave the electronic screen on frequently. This could affect children's engagement in other activities.
- ✗ Turn on electronic screen during mealtime. This could affect communication among family members.
- ✗ Keep electronic screen products at a place easily accessible by children.



**Tips on using electronic screen products:**

- Adults should accompany children and give guidance and explanation on the content so as to bring out the educational function of the product.
- Ensure proper posture and keep proper distance: keep a viewing distance of at least 50 cm from the computer, 40 cm from the tablet and 30 cm from the smartphone.
- Have breaks at times. Look at distant objects to relax the eye muscles.
- Often change postures to relax muscles of different body parts, such as doing some simple stretching exercises while watching TV.
- When using an earphone, set the sound volume to no more than 60% of the maximum volume. Listen for less than a total of 60 minutes a day.

## III. Sleeping time

### 1. Sleep for young children

Adequate and good quality sleep is essential for young children's growth and development. The total amount of sleep (including daytime naps) that young children need each day varies with age.

To ensure adequate and good quality sleep, it is necessary to have regular sleep and wake-up times. In addition, excessive "screen time" will take up the time for physical activity and sleep, so it is also important to limit screen time.

### 2. Benefits of adequate sleep

Adequate sleep is crucial for young children's cognitive development and emotional regulation. Besides, shorter sleep duration is associated with higher adiposity, poorer emotional regulation, impaired growth, more screen time and higher risk of injuries.

### 3. Recommendations on sleeping time

Young children should have adequate and quality sleep every day.

The Department of Health recommends that:

- Young children of 2 years of age: should have **11 to 14 hours of good quality sleep**, including naps, with regular sleep and wake-up times.
- Young children of 3 to 6 years of age: should have **10 to 13 hours of good quality sleep**, which may include a nap, with regular sleep and wake-up times.



#### 4. Tips on sleep for young children

Apart from ensuring adequate sleep time, it is also crucial to set up a stimulation-free and comfortable sleeping environment. Parents can take reference from the following tips:

- Keep young children's sleeping area quiet, dim and comfortable.
- Before bedtime, turn off the computer and keep other electronic screen products out of reach.
- Help young children establish a soothing pre-sleep routine with a period of relaxing activities an hour or so before bed, e.g. taking a bath and reading a book. Avoid stressful and stimulating activities such as playing video games and having vigorous exercises.



## Part 4

### Tipson Physical Activity

- I. Motor development and unique characteristics of young children
- II. Parent-child physical games
- III. Safety measures
- IV. Home-school co-operation

## I. Motor development and unique characteristics of young children

### 1. Motor development of young children

The period of ages 2 to 6 is a fundamental stage for motor development of young children. During this period, they acquire motor skills like walking, stair climbing, running, jumping, climbing, throwing, batting and manipulating items. Through appropriate teaching, practices in daily life and physical games, children progress from being clumsy to proficient in these fundamental motor skills, which can subsequently be formed into more complex movements and sports techniques for daily activities and formal sports.

However, as young children grow older, it does not necessarily mean an improvement in the level of motor skills. The only way to become proficient in motor skills is through continuous learning, practice and application. On the contrary, movements remain clumsy and inefficient without sufficient practice. Take adults as an example, they are proficient in walking because they walk every day. This is the consequence of long-term practice. However, not every person is good at catching a basketball while running or striking back a tennis ball with a racquet. The failure to master these skills is not due to a lack of potential, but a lack of learning opportunities and practice.

Young children are good learners. In order to fully develop their potential, parents have to provide them with ample opportunities to learn, practise and master various motor skills that are beneficial for their lifetime. Parents can take reference from the following activities:

Table 3 Recommended activities for enhancing the development of children's movement skills

| Level 1   | Level 2  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Running</li> <li>• Jumping on the spot on two legs</li> <li>• Jumping up on the dominant leg</li> <li>• Standing on the dominant leg for a short duration</li> <li>• Throwing and catching a small ball/bean bag</li> <li>• Kicking a static ball</li> <li>• Dribbling with two hands</li> <li>• Propelling a tricycle by pushing off the ground with both feet</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dodging obstacles while running</li> <li>• Jumping down and forward on two legs</li> <li>• Jumping forward on left or right leg</li> <li>• Standing on left or right leg</li> <li>• Throwing and catching a small ball/bean bag while moving</li> <li>• Kicking or stopping a rolling ball</li> <li>• Dribbling with two hands or the dominant hand continuously</li> <li>• Pedalling a tricycle or a bicycle with training wheel(s)</li> </ul> |



### Smart tips

Children with good motor skills are more likely to engage in physical activity after growing up. Compared with their less skilful counterparts, they are more physically ready to master different sport skills and enjoy the experience.

## 2. Unique characteristics of young children

Young children have less endurance and shorter attention span when compared with adults, so interesting physical activities with game elements should be chosen to arouse children’s interest. When leading a physical activity, parents should take into consideration their children’s unique characteristics in order to address their needs and add more fun to the activity.

- **Intermittent and vigorous activity pattern**

When engaging in a physical activity, young children usually do not know how to adjust the level of intensity. They tend to move quickly and vigorously in an intermittent manner. As the **recommended amount of physical activity is accumulated throughout the whole course of a day**, it is not necessary for parents to have children engaged in 180 minutes of physical activity at one go. This will only make them feel exhausted and lose interest in physical activity. Instead, **it is more advisable to have more frequent but shorter sessions, so as to provide ample opportunities for young children to engage in physical activity** and stay active throughout the day.

- **Give direct and specific encouragement to enhance children’s sense of achievement**

Provide more opportunities for children to learn and try something new. Praise them and give them verbal encouragement to build up a sense of achievement and self-confidence, thereby enabling them to face challenges. Bear in mind, however, not to reward children with foods or screen-time activities.

## II. Parent-child physical games

Parent-child physical games not only help young children accumulate an adequate amount of physical activity per day, but also promote their motor development and enhance parent-child relationships.

The Department of Health has designed a series of parent-child physical games that can be easily played at home, with the aim of “creating unlimited possibilities within limited space”. Every game has different training targets, such as improving balance and coordination, strengthening gross and fine motor skills, and training the ability to catch and throw. Also, these physical games can better cultivate parent-child relationships regardless of location and weather conditions.

When young children participate in parent-child physical activities, parents can encourage them to modify or create game rules. This allows them to develop their creativity and have fun in the activities.



### III. Safety measures

Parents can put in place measures to prevent young children from getting injured during a physical activity and follow the safety rules below:

- Put edge protectors on sharp corners of furniture (e.g. storage cabinet and table) to prevent children from injury from bumping into them.
- Remove and tidy up items on the ground (e.g. wire, toy, curtain string) to prevent children from tripping over.
- Remove furniture (e.g. table and chairs) to create more space for physical activity at home.
- Go to cushioned playgrounds to reduce the risk of injuries.
- Young children should be accompanied by adults when using playground facilities such as slides, seesaws or swings.
- Tell children not to run, jump, or chase each other when using playground facilities (e.g. slides) to prevent them from falling from height.
- Avoid vigorous level of physical activity one hour before and after meal to avoid indigestion.
- Stop to rest or seek medical advice if children feel sick (e.g. having difficulty in breathing, turning pale, feeling dizzy or nauseous) when doing physical activity.
- Ride bicycle on a cycling track and wear protective gears such as helmets and knee pads.
- Check out the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) as well as the weather and environment during outdoor activities. Avoid vigorous activities if the temperature is high, or if the humidity is too high or too low, or if the air quality is poor.
- When the UV index is at the moderate level or above, wear a wide-brimmed hat and light, long-sleeved clothing and apply sun-screen lotion to block both UVA and UVB rays during outdoor activities.
- Warm up before exercising and cool down afterwards.

### IV. Home-school co-operation

Family and school play an important role in promoting physical activity among young children. Both parties should adopt the same strategy and co-operate with each other. Parents should take the initiative to communicate and co-operate with the school and to arrange adequate physical activity for their children after school.

Here are some useful tips:

- Learn about the arrangement of physical activity at school. If possible, join the activity.
- Share views with your children's school on building a healthy school. Participate in the home-school working group for setting up healthy school policy.
- Enrol in physical activity organised by the school or in the community (e.g. hobby group, outdoor activity and workshop). Learn about physical activity and related skills.
- Guide children to set a goal for physical activity and use "Little Healthy Fighter's Healthy Living Logbook" to keep a log of daily physical activities, so as to develop the habit of exercising.
- Inform the school of changes in the health status of your children so that necessary arrangements can be made.



Little Healthy Fighter's Healthy Living Logbook

## Let's Scan the QR code: Health Education Resources

"StartSmart@school.hk" Campaign



Posters



Letter to Parents



Videos



Healthy Tips



Recipe Sharing Platform  
(Chinese version only)



"Healthy Drinks at School" Charter



Parent-child Physical Games



Health Guide



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