



# Health Scout

January 2010

FROM THE NURSE'S OFFICE

## Becoming a Better Health Model

Every year many people make New Year's Resolutions, and many also break them before February! As we near the New Year maybe we should rethink our resolutions and choose one that will benefit the whole family. One fairly easy resolution parents should consider is becoming a better model of healthy behaviors for their children. It has been said that children "learn what they live". Believe it or not we as parents have a great deal of influence on our children and are really their first teachers in life. Starting to foster healthy behaviors at a very early age is essential for those healthy behaviors to become healthy habits.

Just as we as adults find it difficult to change old habits come January 1<sup>st</sup>, children are faced with the same dilemma. By about the 4<sup>th</sup> Grade, children have developed habits that are ingrained for them. Research shows that behaviors are very difficult (but not impossible) to change by the time they become habits. This is why there is such a need to start young and stay consistent with healthy role modeling.



## Getting Started

Here are a few tips to help you get off on the right foot for both your own health and your children's.

- **Make gradual changes:** Drink one more glass of water every day. Walk 10 minutes longer every week. Cut down one less indulgent food or drink every week.
- **Balance bad habits with good ones:** Watch TV while you're on the treadmill. And don't go cold turkey on your favorite foods—it's ok to have an occasional treat. You'll be more likely to stick to your commitment if you don't feel that you are depriving yourself.
- **Start walking:** Take the stairs instead of the escalator. Park at the back of the parking lot and walk instead of cruising for the closest spot
- **Drink more water and less soda:** You can't expect your kids to cut back on soda if you won't.
- **Listen to when you're full:** Ban the "clean your plate" rule. Push your plate away when you're no longer hungry; it takes 20 minutes for your brain to process it is full so slow down. An adult's stomach is the size of a loosely clenched fist, so it doesn't take much food to fill it.
- **Grocery shop on a full stomach:** It really helps prevent buying unhealthy snacks on an impulse.
- **Be positive:** Don't talk about your weight or put yourself down in front of your kids. You don't want them to think that a healthy lifestyle is only about how much they weigh. Try not to complain about how much you may dislike exercising or eating healthy foods—your kids will hear you.
- **Focus on the why as well as the how:** Knowing why being healthy is important will lead to meaningful change. When you learn something new or a little tip that works for you, share it with the family.

