Counting down to a healthy lifestyle

Ages 5-17

10 or more hours of sleep

- Keep your child’s bedtime the same every night.
- Create a calming bedtime routine by listening to quiet music, reading a book to relax or practising deep breathing.
- Encourage your child to be active during the day.
- Keep TV’s, video games and computers out of your child’s bedroom. The light and sound from screens prevents children from sleeping.
- Avoid food and drinks that have caffeine (colas, chocolate, tea and coffee).

5 or more vegetables/fruits

- Have vegetables and/or fruit with meals and snacks.
- Fill half the plate with vegetables and fruit.
- Eat meals or snacks together as often as you can. Children are more likely to try foods when they see adults enjoying them.
- Avoid giving your child snacks that are high in sugar, fat and salt.
- Keep fruit in a bowl on the table and cut vegetables in the fridge so that they are ready to eat.
- Try a new vegetable every week. Ask children to help pick it out. It could take 10 or more times before children taste and accept a new food, so keep trying.
2 hours or less of screen time

- Limit the time children spend on the TV, computer (outside of school work), electronic games and other screens.
- Eat meals together as a family at the table and not in front of the TV.
- Replace screen time with active time. Take a walk as a family or invite your children’s friends over to play outside.
- Have board games, puzzles and craft supplies around the house to keep children busy.

1 hour or more of moderate to vigorous physical activity

- Provide a space and time for children to be active.
- Choose activities that increase your child’s heart rate and occasionally make them out of breath. Try activities such as soccer, swimming, dancing, skating or playground games.
- Allow your children to walk or bike to school, the park or store.
- Have children practice movement-based skills such as throwing a ball, running, jumping or swinging a racket.
- As a family, be active together and as a parent, model a physical lifestyle for your child.
- Involve children around the house with chores such as gardening, vacuuming, dusting or sweeping.

0 sugary drinks

- Avoid sugar-sweetened drinks such as pop, fruit drinks, energy and sport drinks that contain few or no nutrients.
- Offer children water throughout the day. Pack a reusable water bottle for school.

Also Consider:
Tell children that healthy bodies come in different shapes and sizes. Be aware, children watch and listen to how you respond to your own body.

Adapted with permission from Toronto Public Health.