Making a Meal Plan
Work in a Family

Have a family meeting. Ask everyone for suggestions about how you can eat healthier as a family. Be flexible, creative, and try new things. The support of your family is important!

What if I need to eat foods my family does not like?
What if my spouse or partner will not cook healthy foods?

• Be prepared to eat a separate meal. If necessary, just eat together even if the food is different.

• Keep your own stash of healthy foods, but encourage your family to try them. Your family may be pleasantly surprised.

• Make a separate small portion for yourself without added fat and salt. You can make your family higher-calorie dinners or desserts, but make only enough for one meal. No leftovers mean less temptation!

• Use different spices and herbs to add some pizzazz. The MOVE!* Handout “Spice It Up” can give you some great ideas.
How do I handle my spouse or partner saying that a food is healthy, even if I know it has too many calories and fat?

- Review the food labels or look the food up in a calorie guide and share this with your spouse.
- Be specific about the ways in which you need to decrease calories to lose weight.
- Provide a grocery list of healthier foods that you prefer and give it to the food shopper or offer to take over food shopping.
- Ask each member of the family to make a list of his or her favorite treat foods. Then pick those that you like least to keep in the house. They’ll be satisfied, and you won’t be nearly as tempted.
- Offer to help with meal preparation.
- Share MOVE!® Handouts and other information you learn from the MOVE!® Program.
- Ask a registered dietitian for additional help and include your spouse/partner.

What do I say to my family’s complaints about wanting “real” food, not “diet” food?

- Healthy food does not have to be diet food.
- Eating lower-calorie foods can mean that you can eat more.
- Healthy food makes you feel healthy and have energy.
To avoid temptation in the supermarket, put only the healthiest foods on your shopping list. Then ask your spouse or kids to have a “goodie run,” where they go to the market once a week and buy their favorite treats. Have them keep their treats in a place you don’t go every day – maybe the garage or basement.

**What if I have tried low-fat, low-calorie recipes and foods and no one will eat them? I end up throwing out more food than we eat.**

- Start small. Only change one recipe at a single meal.
- Try substituting a similar food; just use a version that is lower in fat, sugar, or salt.
- Do not announce that the food is “healthy,” just say it is prepared in a “new” way or say nothing at all.
- Work on gradual, small changes. Start adding water to the orange juice or pouring skim milk into a whole milk container, or cut some sugar and fat out of each recipe. Chances are no one will even notice.

**What do I do? My family only wants to eat out.**

- The MOVE!* Handout “Make It Quick” can help.
- Work with your family to make a meal preparation plan where 5 days a week, you plan the meals; 2 days a week, others in the family get to choose where and what to eat. You compensate by eating smaller portions.
- If you do eat out, the MOVE!* Handouts “Restaurant Tips” and “Fast Food Alternatives” can help you to choose healthy, low-calorie options.