

Limit Fast Food to Once per Week! – Summer 2007

According to a Harvard study in the January 2004 Journal of Pediatrics, 30 % of American children eat fast food each day in the United States. With the hectic, on the go schedules that many families keep today little time is left for a homemade nutritious dinner, making fast food a quick and easy option. As a result, fast food consumption among America's children has increased five times since the 1970's, mirroring an increase in childhood obesity rates. Why is fast food so bad for children? Children who eat fast food consume, on average, 187 more calories each day than those who don't eat fast food. Most of these additional calories come in the form of fat, carbohydrates and sugar and result in an average additional weight gain of six pounds per year among children who eat fast food 2 to 3 times per week. In addition, children who eat fast food consume less fiber and miss out on many of the important nutrients needed for healthy growth that come from fruit, vegetables and milk. The providers at Advanced Pediatrics recommend that families try to limit fast food consumption to no more than once per week. Some ideas for managing meals with today's busy schedules include:

- Plan ahead simple meals for busy evenings, making sure to include a fruit and a vegetable.
- Prepare and freeze main dishes on the weekend that can be unthawed for a quick meal later in the week.
- Start a crock pot meal in the morning so it will be ready when you get home from work and activities.
- If you must eat out, ask for nutrition information and choose meals low in fat. Look for menu options that include a fruit and vegetable and drink water or low fat milk.