

Local Ways to Eat Smart and Move More

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In Erie County, 65% of adults suffer from what health condition? Diabetes? Heart disease? Cancer? Actually, it's none of these. While all are conditions that affect a significant proportion of the community, 65% of adults in Erie County are considered overweight or obese. What has caused such a high rate of children and adults to be either overweight or obese? This is a complex issue to address, but two main factors play a big role in weight: nutrition and exercise.

Finding a balance between the numbers of calories you eat and the numbers of calories your body uses will help maintain what is commonly called a person's "ideal weight." Sounds easy right? But, as most of us know, finding that balance is not always an easy task. With the right information, resources, and personal motivation, you can achieve balance and reach your personal fitness goals. The following resources can help you improve your nutrition and increase your amount of exercise:

- **Community gardens:** A fresh supply of fruits and vegetables, while working to maintain the garden, provides opportunity for better nutrition, exercise, and meeting new people. If there isn't a community garden in your area, why not start one yourself?
- **Local farms:** A great place to obtain fresh produce, you can choose between going to a local farmers' market or a farm to "pick your own." Picking your own provides exercise and fresh air, and kids love to show you what they've picked!
- **MyPyramid.gov:** Sponsored by the US Department of Agriculture, this website helps individuals learn how to balance meals and reduce calorie and fat intake. The ability to create personalized, well-balanced nutrition plans is available.
- **Fitness and recreational facilities:** When you can't be outside, there are many indoor facilities available to exercise and have fun while doing so: Best Fitness, Curves, Family First, LECOM, Nautilus, Planet Fitness, and the YMCA are but a few facilities available to Erie County residents. Some facilities have income-based plans and options for child care.
- **Outdoor recreation areas:** If you love the outdoors, take time to walk, run, rollerblade, or bike on the trails at Presque Isle State Park. You can also play volleyball, canoe, and participate in other activities. Many communities and neighborhoods have local parks. If you don't have a park near you, why not take a walk in your neighborhood?
- **Charity walks:** Walks and runs that raise funds are a great way to get exercise and benefit a great cause.

Whatever your nutrition and fitness level, it's never too late to make positive changes. As with any activity that can have an impact on your health, be sure to consult your family doctor to make a plan. For more information about local farms and annual charity walks in Erie County, visit www.ecdh.org. Select the *Publication* tab, and browse the available links within the *Community Health* column, or contact the Health Education division of the Erie County Department of Health at 814-451-6700.