**The Dietary Guidelines for Americans (www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines), published every five years by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, outlines a healthy diet which:**

- emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products;
- includes lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, and nuts; and
- is low in saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, salt and added sugars.

## Establishing healthy eating habits

"I think regular meals are very important because kids want to graze all day long — generally five to six small meals a day are ideal," said Lori Mooney, a registered and licensed dietitian and nutritionist from Nationwide Children's Hospital.

Her suggestions on establishing proper eating patterns:

- Regular meals are a must.
- Snacks should be healthy and planned.
- Don't skip meals — plan a small meal with two or three food groups.
- Parents need to be good role models — kids eat the way their families eat.
- Watch your portion sizes.
- Don't have junk food around for kids to grab and eat all day.
- Decrease sweetened beverages such as soda and sport drinks.
- Give children a large glass of water after school because they usually will be dehydrated.
- Stop eating two hours before bedtime.

"Keep a balance between eating and activities and your kids will, too. They are going to mirror what you do. Studies show that when children eat with their families they have a greater intake of fruit and vegetables, they drink more milk and they don't eat as much fried foods," said Mooney.

# HEALTHY EATING HABITS

## Grocery list

COLUMBUS parent MAGAZINE
ColumbusParent.com

This feature, written by Pattie Stechschulte, originally appeared in Columbus Parent Magazine in March 2008.
Visit ColumbusParent.com for more tips about keeping your family healthy.