



# CONNECT

Humans are naturally social creatures with connections to family, friends, and our community. These social connections can have powerful influences, both good and bad, over our actions and perceptions. ***Recognizing the power of our social networks can allow one to harness the positive energy in these interactions and use it to improve the health of our families.***

## The Facts:

- Our perception of a “normal” diet, body weight, and exercise habits are influenced by our friends, family, and acquaintances.<sup>1</sup> Restructuring our networks by strengthening connections with positive role models can have a beneficial effect on how we take care of ourselves and our family.
- Dynamic social networks have been shown to promote human cooperation.<sup>2</sup> Forming new social networks of like-minded individuals working for positive health changes can be an important step toward success.
- Our families are the roots of our culture and have the strongest influence over our behaviors. Enlisting the cooperation of siblings, parents, and grandparents is essential to effecting positive change for our children and maintaining healthy habits for times to come.

## MAKING POSITIVE CONNECTIONS:

1. **Create a network of workout partners to maintain routine exercise habits.** Join a dance class, yoga class or walking group to meet people with common goals.
2. **Connect with other families in your community to get healthy.** Share recipes and tips, cook together, and support each other’s achievements towards a common goal.
3. **Use social media.** Social media sites are a great way to get ideas on getting healthy and to form groups of people who can cheer each other on. Share knowledge with others about what has worked for you and your family.
4. **Start a movement.** Find others who have health in mind, and make health-promoting changes within your neighborhood, schools, or greater community.

<sup>1</sup> Christakis NA, Fowler, JH “The Spread of Obesity in a Large Social Network over 32 Years” *N Engl J Med* 2007;357:370-9.

<sup>2</sup> Rand DG, Arbesmanc S, Christakis NA “Dynamic social networks promote cooperation in experiments with humans” *PNAS*, November 29, 2011 vol. 108 no. 48 19193-19198