

Keeping Parents Nurtured

To prevent parental burnout, reach out to teachers, coaches, scout leaders, extended family, and friends to form a support network. Try a buddy system in which you team up with a group of other parents of overweight kids to facilitate physical activities, educational sessions, and problem-solving dialogues. Enlist the help of your community-local markets, skating rinks, shopping malls, or restaurants-and check out the programs offered by your county or city recreation department. Almost all are geared toward families, are run by volunteer parents, and are developmentally appropriate for children of different ages. Your local YMCA or religious organization may offer similar opportunities.

We've often wondered if these organizations even know they're helping prevent overweight in children-we thank them, and you as parents should become advocates for these programs. Show your gratitude and support for the healthy opportunities they provide.

If you're one of the unlucky few whose community lacks such facilities and opportunities, consider organizing a parent advocacy group. Rally other parents to encourage schools to improve lunch selections, remove junk-food vending machines, increase physical education time, and, most important, increase recess or free play time.

The key is family and community support-and providing opportunities for fun and fitness for your child.