

CATCH

Katie Mahoney, M.S., R.D., L.D.
Nutrition Education/Wellness Coordinator

Obesity is a growing health issue among many adults and children. In an effort to combat rising childhood obesity numbers, many schools and school districts have implemented the CATCH program. CATCH is an acronym for “Coordinated Approach to Child Health”. This coordinated school health program addresses the key components to helping students achieve and/or maintain a healthy lifestyle. There are four components to the CATCH program: lessons in the classroom, healthy foods served in the cafeteria, physical education, and family support at home.

The CATCH program is in each of our elementary and middle schools. CATCH teaches children about nutrition, how to exercise and still have fun, how to choose healthy foods, and eating healthy at home. Continue reading to learn more about the [CATCH program in the cafeteria](#) and [what you can do at home to improve your family’s health.](#)



CATCH in the School Cafeteria



When learning about healthy foods, elementary students are introduced to the **GO**, **SLOW**, and **WHOA** foods system.

Green means **GO!** **GO** foods are the healthiest foods and are the lowest in fat and sugar. Fresh, frozen, and some canned fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low-fat or no-fat dairy products, beans, and lean meats are all **GO** foods.

Yellow means **SLOW**. **SLOW** foods are slightly higher in fat and sugar and a little less healthy than **GO** foods. Foods like baked French fries, baked potato chips, sorbet, dried fruit, pretzels, white bread, reduced-fat milk, peanut butter, jelly, ketchup, and low-fat condiments are in the **SLOW** foods group.

Red means **WHOA!!** This group of foods is the least healthy and the highest in fat and sugar. This includes foods like French fries, doughnuts, croissants, potato chips, cookies, cakes, candy, whole milk, ice cream, chicken nuggets, hamburgers, soft drinks, energy drinks, fruit-flavored drinks, hot dogs, and butter.

During lunch, green, yellow, and red circles are placed on the serving line in front of the foods being served. This helps students to know whether the foods they're eating that day are **GO**, **SLOW**, or **WHOA** foods! Students can also use the large **GO**, **SLOW**, and **WHOA** color-coded menus in the cafeteria to make healthy lunch choices.

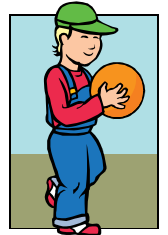
To stay healthy, be sure to eat nutritious **GO** foods every day, **SLOW** foods a few times a week, and **WHOA** foods only a few times each month.

CATCH at Home

Children imitate what they see their parents doing. This includes good *and* bad behaviors. If a child often sees their parents eating pizza, chips, cookies, soft drinks and not exercising, it is likely that the child will also adopt those habits. On the same note, if a child sees their parents eating fruits and vegetables, drinking milk and/or water, exercising frequently and living a healthy lifestyle, the child is likely to adopt those healthy habits. It is difficult to break unhealthy habits, but it can be done. If you're having a hard time finding the motivation to change, try focusing on your child's health and their future as a motivating force to change your family's behavior.

Here are some tips that might help you to make the change from an unhealthy lifestyle to new healthy habits:

- Participate in school activities! If your child's school is having a Family Fun Night or Open Gym, take the entire family for a night of fun and exercise.
- Allow your child to be involved in shopping at the grocery store. Shop for healthy foods and allow your child to pick out healthy foods. Buy whole grain foods, low-fat or fat-free dairy products, frozen/canned/fresh fruits and vegetables. Try to avoid buying sugary drinks and snacks and high-fat foods.
- Drink more water and/or low-fat or non-fat milk. Our bodies need water to stay hydrated and working properly. Low-fat and non-fat milk are full of vitamins and minerals that keep our bodies strong.





- The next time you prepare a meal, think about the cooking method you'll use. Baking, broiling, grilling, or microwave foods cuts down on added fat and calories. Frying and sautéing are two cooking methods that add fat and calories to your food so use these methods sparingly.
- If you can't eat dinner together every night, try once per week. Set aside time where you eat dinner together as a family, with the TV off.
- Be physically active as a family. Do chores together, play outside, go for walks, walk to school with your child, park further away in the parking lot; these small steps can add up to big results for you and your family.