

Dear Parent or Guardian,

In health class we are studying physical fitness and weight management. We define *fitness* as the ability to handle the physical work and play of everyday life without becoming overly tired. We will discuss the role of aerobic and anaerobic exercise in building up the body's strength, endurance, and flexibility. Next we will study the circulatory system and how it works. We will discuss how diet and exercise can help ensure the health of the heart and blood vessels. Then we will explore how the bones and muscles work together to allow movement. Each student will apply this knowledge to plan an effective and enjoyable personal fitness program. Finally, we will study safe methods for managing weight through diet and exercise. Since weight management is often such an important issue with teens, this final section will also emphasize the dangers of extreme diets and eating disorders.

Some questions your teen will answer as we study these topics are: *What does it mean to be fit? What types of activities will help me stay fit? How can I keep my circulatory, skeletal, and muscular systems healthy? What do I need to think about when I plan a fitness program? How do I know what is a healthy weight for me? What are the symptoms of eating disorders?*

To some teens, "being fit" means only that the body looks trim, attractive, and healthy. However, the benefits of fitness are much more than just physical well-being. As they will learn in this unit of study, physical fitness also contributes to mental, emotional, and social health. For example, it enhances self-esteem, reduces stress, sharpens mental alertness, and increases efficiency.

To support and extend our classroom work, please set aside some time during the next few weeks to complete one or more of the following activities with your teen:

- Work together to develop and begin a shared exercise plan. A brisk walk or bicycle ride will provide both exercise and a private time to talk about the day's events.
- Plan and prepare a meal together that includes healthful, nutritious, low-fat foods. For example, make a meal of pasta or fish accompanied by ample servings of fresh vegetables, fruits, and low-fat dairy products.
- Discuss weight issues, and consider how you might help each other to have realistic and healthful attitudes about weight.

Please feel free to engage in any other activities that you believe will encourage your teen to develop a lifelong habit of regular exercise, healthful nutrition, and safe weight management. Thank you for supporting our classroom work. As always, do not hesitate to contact me for further information.

Sincerely,

Health Teacher