

# Social Media to Promote Health

## Overview

These days, social media dominates our world. Social media can be a powerful tool to promote eating better and moving more, especially among youth. Using technology like social media and health-related apps can make school wellness activities, physical activity, and nutrition tracking more engaging and fun for students.



## Popular Types of Social Media and How They Can Promote Health

- **Pinterest:** Post and share boards focused on physical activity breaks, nutrition promotion, healthy celebrations, healthy fundraisers, etc. Pinterest can be a powerful tool to engage classroom teachers in health and wellness activities. [Action for Healthy Kids' Pinterest board](#) gives ideas to get you started!
- **Facebook:** Use Facebook to post about school wellness events, recruit health and wellness volunteers, share healthy recipes and tips about eating better and moving more, and engage students, [families and the community](#) in a healthy competition and conversation about healthy lifestyles.

- **Twitter:** Are you attending a professional development about PE, wellness policies, Smart Snacks or nutrition education? Is your school hosting a health fair or other wellness event for [Every Kid Healthy Week](#)? Tweet about it and tag your school.
- **Instagram:** Post pictures of school wellness activities such as taste tests, health and wellness fairs, healthy classroom celebrations, etc. to share with your school community.

## Take Action

- Develop a social media campaign around a specific health topic and post on your school's social media sites, while also encouraging staff, students and the community to participate and share messages on their personal accounts. Here's how to run a successful campaign:
  - Stay focused with a specific theme like fruits and vegetables, healthy snacks, sleep, water, physical activity, etc.
  - Compile your content ahead of time. What videos, photos, resources and information will you use? Ask a few students, parents and staff to submit content ideas to spread the workload.
  - Ask older student role models, your school mascot, or administrators to model and promote healthy messages on social media. Take pictures or videos of them practicing healthy behaviors and share them!
  - If you're promoting on multiple social media sites, delegate one person to be in charge of content for each site.
  - Set a goal for number of posts you'll make for the campaign. Will you post daily? Weekly? A certain number of posts during a specific time period or event?
  - Choose a hashtag to help track your posts. Ask students to help identify a creative and fun one!

- Use social media for a school and community-wide healthy competition. Challenge ideas may include:
  - **Water Challenge:** Track your water consumption to meet the recommended 8 glasses of water per day. Take photos of you drinking water, the change in water level of your water bottle, or post a status update at the end of every day.
  - **Walking Challenge:** Host a walking competition using social media. Create a school hashtag and encourage students to use the hashtag to post their daily step amounts or photos/videos of them exercising.
  - **Healthy Snack Challenge:** Host a healthy snack competition using social media. Create a school hashtag and encourage students to use the hashtag to post or photos/videos their healthy snack for the day and nutrition label for that snack.
- Post photos, videos and updates before, after and during school wellness events. Use it as a tool to promote your event, show everyone how much fun you're having and thank volunteers and participants.
- Having a school health team meeting and looking for parent, staff, student and community participation? Post the meeting details and tag people to attend.
- Make sure your school community knows the basics about your wellness policy, how much time students get for lunch, who's on the school health team and can answer questions, etc. Use social media to communicate this message at the beginning of the school year.
- Brag! [Apply for a grant](#) and post a selfie of your school health team with your grant or award check!

## Additional Resources

- Check out Action for Healthy Kids' social media pages for inspiration and ideas: [Pinterest](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) (Action for Healthy Kids)
- Here's a list of our favorite free health apps to use with students (make sure students have parent permission to download):
  - **SworKit Kids:** Make fitness a game with customizable workouts that focus on strength, agility and flexibility.
  - **Waterlogged:** Track your daily water consumption to ensure you're meeting recommendations with this easy-to-use app.
  - **Fooducate:** Scan nutrition facts labels of your favorite foods to get a rating of how healthy that item is.
  - **Map My Run or Strava:** Track your runs, post photos and interact with your friends with either of these fitness apps.
  - **Spring Moves:** Match your running playlist with your run to a more energizing, fun workout.
  - **Headspace:** Help manage stress with meditation exercises on this app.
  - **SuperTracker:** Get your personalized nutrition and physical activity plan. Track your foods and physical activities to see how they stack up against daily recommendations. (United States Department of Agriculture)
  - **BAM! Dining Decisions:** Learn how to make healthy choices with games, quizzes, and other interactive features that cover topics such as food, nutrition, physical activity, and safety. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

## Tips



Seek administrative approval before endorsing social media campaigns or posted on school sponsored social media outlets.



Establish clear guidelines for how students should use social media and technology for health campaigns and activities.



Use hashtags to track your conversation on social media.



Don't reinvent the wheel - be sure to research what's out there that's

Pick a hashtag and use it consistently throughout the year.

been successful before doing your own social media campaign.

## Related Activities

### **Healthy Messages for Families**

Not only do parents support healthy habits at home, but they can also support your wellness efforts at school. Start by sharing key healthy messages with parents to give them tools for supporting health at home.

### **Staff as Healthy Role Models**

It's important for all school staff, whether or not they are members of the school health team, to practice healthy role modeling to support and encourage healthy habits among students.