

INTRODUCTION

Your Awesome Body

Have you ever stopped to think how awesome your body is? It's totally unique, and it's the one thing in the world that will always be all yours. It can heal wounds, kill germs, and fight infections, all on its own. Sure, sometimes you need to go to the doctor or take medicine—everybody does—but your body does an amazing job of taking care of itself . . . especially if you help it do its job.

Another reason your body is amazing is what it does with food. Imagine eating a taco. Lots of different types of **nutrients** are in tacos, like proteins, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, and minerals. After you chew and swallow a bite, your body knows how to take it apart and turn all those good, healthy nutrients into energy. Very cool!



Food = Energy

You need energy for everything you do, like growing, running, and preventing illness—even breathing. That energy comes from food.

Your body works, feels, and looks its best when you take in about the same amount of energy as you use. That means eating the right amount of wholesome, nutritious food and getting the right amount of exercise every day. Eating a variety of foods helps make sure you get a variety of nutrients.



Taking care of yourself this way helps you feel

energized

positive

capable

motivated

attractive

sharp

strong

focused

ready for fun

ready for anything

great!



If you don't eat well or stay active enough, you may develop serious problems with your health. You also might:

- ★ feel sluggish, tired, or generally lousy
- ★ feel sad or depressed
- ★ have trouble concentrating
- ★ do poorly in school
- ★ feel stressed about your looks
- ★ not be able to keep up with friends' activities
- ★ feel hungry all the time

What Can You Do About Fitness and Food?

A lot, actually. You have the power to **Be the Boss of Your Body**. That means taking charge of your own health and wellness, and that's what this book is about.

Be Fit, Be Strong, Be You is filled with ideas, activities, and skills to help you

- ★ learn how the right food can help you be healthy
- ★ find the right weight for your body
- ★ feel better for school, sports, hobbies, and other activities
- ★ increase your self-confidence
- ★ look your best
- ★ discover fun ways to be active

Look for **B³ Skills** in every chapter that you can use to help yourself be healthier now and for the rest of your life. (B³ is short for **Be the Boss of Your Body**.)

Healthy, Happy You

Being fit is about more than being skinny or having big muscles. You can be skinny and not be healthy. Being large doesn't automatically mean you're *not* healthy. Being truly fit is about being the *right* weight for your height and body build. People come in many different sizes and shapes, and your body type will likely be different from those of your friends. **And that's okay.**

Being fit also means using food to keep you healthy and happy. It means being active. It means being confident in who you are. And it's knowing that the way you feel about yourself affects your health.



We wrote this book to help you do all those things, whether you feel great most of the time or would like some help feeling better. Whether you're just the right weight, overweight, or underweight. Whether you're happy with your body or wish you were happier. No matter how fit you are now, you can do more to help yourself and be in charge of your health. With the right attitude, you can be fit, be strong, and **be you.**



Are You Ready?

There is one secret to being the boss of your body.

You can succeed only if you make the choice to do it for **yourself**—and not because your mom, dad, doctor, school nurse, big brother, pet dog, best friend Harry, or anyone else wants you to. Your motivation is power. That doesn't mean you don't need coaching, love, support, and advice from family, friends, healthcare providers, or teachers. It just means you have to do this for you.

Take this quiz to see how ready you are. Answer each statement with a **1** (never), **2** (sometimes), or **3** (often). Write your answers on a piece of paper.

1. I skip breakfast.
2. I eat at fast-food restaurants.
3. I drink more than one can of soda a day.
4. I eat when I'm bored.
5. I eat sugar-heavy snacks like candy and ice cream.
6. I eat alone.
7. I eat while I watch TV or play video games.
8. I spend more than two hours a day looking at screens (TV, computer, video games, etc.).

Take a look at the questions you answered with a 2 or 3. Can you think of ways to improve in these areas? Are you ready to try? These are important first steps to being the boss of your body. Give yourself small goals that you can get excited about and reach. Even if you've never thought about your fitness before, you're reading this book—that's something! You're on your way.

We'd love to hear how the ideas in this book work for you. If you want to share your story or ask us a question, you can email us at **help4kids@freespirit.com** or send us a letter at:

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NOTE TO GROWN-UPS

The Be the Boss of Your Body series is about kids taking charge of their own health, but that doesn't mean they don't need help from adults. This is especially true with diet and fitness. Parents and other caring adults are essential in helping children develop good eating habits and be physically fit. Eating well is a family affair. Young children are dependent on the food you offer them, and older children may adopt your eating habits. Whether the kids you're working with are overweight, underweight, or of normal weight, they need encouragement, positive reinforcement, love, and support while working to take control of their health.

Some of the most important things you can do to help are:

- ★ Read this book so you better understand what your child is doing.
- ★ Be available and supportive.
- ★ Listen to what your child tells you about how he or she feels, and try to understand.
- ★ Give your child as much control as possible to manage his or her diet and exercise.
- ★ Give praise and positive reinforcement for using the B³ skills; celebrate successes.
- ★ Encourage your child to continue participating in school and favorite activities.
- ★ Engage in self-care skills yourself.

Making Good Food and Fitness Decisions

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the National Association of Nurse Practitioners have set guidelines and recommendations to help parents support their children in making good choices about eating and activity. Discuss nutrition with your child's healthcare provider, and start monitoring children's food and fitness when they are quite young. If you suspect your child has an eating disorder, contact your family doctor or another healthcare professional. For general pediatric health information, check out the AAP's Healthy Children Web site (www.healthychildren.org).

Recommendations for Eating

- ★ Model healthy eating with the foods you choose and the portions you eat and serve.
- ★ Teach children about appropriate portion sizes of all foods (see page 48).
- ★ Do not promote "diets."
- ★ Allow children to decide when they are full rather than insisting they clean their plates.
- ★ Offer a diet consisting of all nutrients and food groups (see pages 35–36).
- ★ Limit consumption of energy-dense (high calorie) food.
- ★ Limit the amount of sugar-sweetened beverages such as soda and juice.
- ★ Make sure kids get five or more servings of fruits and vegetables daily.
- ★ Eat a breakfast every day.
- ★ Limit meals outside of the home, especially at fast-food restaurants.
- ★ Regularly eat together as a family.

Recommendations for Shopping

- ★ Include children in planning meals, buying groceries, and making meals.
- ★ Make lists together of healthy snacks that are appealing.
- ★ Don't shop when you're hungry.
- ★ Leave junk food at the store. Keep healthy snacks on hand.

Recommendations for Physical Activity

- ★ Have a goal of 30–60 minutes of moderate to intense activity daily. *Remember that this time can be accumulated throughout the day rather than all at once.*
- ★ Promote physical activity at school and in childcare settings.
- ★ Be active with children. Allow them choices in deciding what to do. Go for a family walk once or twice a week.
- ★ Provide play equipment that increases physical activity.

Recommendations for Screen Time

- ★ Make time in front of TV, computer, and video game screens contingent on exercise: “If you play basketball for one hour, you can have screen time.”
- ★ Limit screen time to two or fewer hours per day.
- ★ Don't allow TV viewing for children less than 2 years of age.
- ★ Do not put a TV in a child's bedroom.

Recommendations for Supporting Children's Self-Esteem

- ★ Support their efforts to make healthy choices in eating and activity by praising successes and good choices, by providing resources they need, and by helping them when they need it.
- ★ Encourage and empathize. Don't criticize their eating, how they look, or their exercise.
- ★ Get professional help when you need it.
- ★ Get the entire family to participate in healthy eating.

Evidence suggests that people who engage in self-care activities live healthier, more productive lives. Teaching kids to look at their health from a holistic perspective—considering body, mind, and spirit—and teaching them self-care skills sets the stage for lifelong wellness and balance. By encouraging and helping your children with the skills in this book, and modeling the skills yourself, you can give them the confidence to uncover the wealth of talent and strength they possess and encourage them to actively participate in their health. These skills can make a positive difference in *your* life, too!

Please remember that this book is not intended as a replacement for professional medical or psychological consultation when they are needed. Children and adolescents who are having serious health problems or new onset of symptoms should be evaluated by their primary care provider. Problems that are acute, severe, and/or associated with other symptoms such as fever, nausea, or rash need to be evaluated and treated by a qualified healthcare professional.

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We provide books, games, cards, DVDs, assessment materials and other resources to assist with:

- *Special Education*
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