



HEALTHY Tips for Families

Lifelong, healthy habits start at home

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Building lifelong healthy habits in children is a family affair and starts in the home. Below are some tips for some ways to help children become healthy, happy, active and fit!

1. Choose a variety of foods

Choose foods with many flavors, colors, textures and smells to expand your child's food choices. Offer new foods at the beginning of a meal and pair them with a familiar food item. Offer your child choices and avoid forcing them to eat. Offer choices. Ask "Which would you like for dinner, broccoli or cauliflower?" instead of "Do you want broccoli for dinner?"

2. Make meals together

Plan together. Shop together. Cook together. Ask about and include some of your child's choices when planning meals. Allow your child to invent new snacks and name them something fun such as, "Power-packed Peas" or "Hector's Hummus." Ask your child to help prepare part of the meal, choose healthy options at the store, or set the table.

3. Offer the same food for everyone

Don't be a "short-order cook" by making different dishes to please children. It's easier to plan family meals when everyone eats the same foods.

4. Reward with attention, not food

Show your love with hugs and kisses. Comfort with hugs and talks. Reward good behavior with nonfood items, such as a walk in the park or reading a book together.

5. Focus on each other at the table

Talk about fun and happy things at mealtime. Turn off the television. Set phones aside. Try to make eating meals a stress-free time.



Plan together.

Shop together.

Cook together.



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6. Listen to your child

If your child says he or she is hungry, offer a small, healthy snack. Snack portions may depend on when the next scheduled meal is (such as a piece of cheese 30 minutes before dinner). At mealtime, if children say they are full, do not make them finish. Learning to take the right portion takes practice. Children learn best by serving themselves. Use large utensils to make it easier. It's okay if children spill in the process.

7. Use positive body language

Speak positively about people's bodies and appearances (including your own) instead of using negative language! Model a healthy self-image to your child by talking positively about your body's shape and size. "Look at me. I am big and tall. I like to eat healthy and be active too." All bodies are shaped differently, making each one unique. Promoting acceptance of different shapes helps children develop positive feelings about their bodies.

8. Limit screen time

Limit screen time, such as TV and computer games, to no more than two hours a day. Get up and move during commercials to get some physical activity.



9. Be active together

Make physical activity fun for the whole family. Involve your children in the planning. Walk, run and play with your child instead of sitting on the sidelines. Use safety gear, such as bike helmets. During winter or summer months, when weather can sometimes make it a challenge to be active outside, try dancing together. For some great resources, [click here](#) or visit extension.unr.edu/healthykids and search "music & dance."



10. Be a good role model

Children model your behavior, so consider each of these tips for your life as well. Make healthy food choices instead of participating in fad diets, be active, limit time spent on the phone and TV (screen time), and speak positively about your body. Learn to listen to your body, eating when you are hungry and stopping when you are satisfied.

REFERENCES

Adapted from USDA. (2011, June). 10 Tips Nutrition Education Series. Retrieved from Choose MyPlate : <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/ten-tips-be-a-healthy-role-model>.



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