

Helping Kids Develop Healthy Habits For A Lifetime



Parents and caregivers can create a healthy environment for children. You can help your child by doing the following:

- Be a role model for healthy eating and active living.
- Provide a calm, relaxed environment at meal times.
- Set limits on screen time. This includes television, tablets and video games.
- Take part in fun physical activity as a family.
- Help children develop a positive body image.
- Avoid diets and excessive exercise plans.

Every Body is a Good Body

When adults make negative comments about their own weight or encourage weight loss, kids are more likely to be critical about their own bodies and engage in unhealthy weight control behaviors.

Teach kids that people come in all shapes and sizes and that being healthy is more than a number on a scale. It's about healthy behaviors, such as enjoying a variety of foods, being physically active, and developing positive relationships with those around them.



Have plenty of
vegetables and fruits

Eat protein foods

Make water
your drink
of choice

Choose
whole grain
foods

Diets Are Not the Answer

Encouraging dieting or forcing children to take part in an exercise program can be harmful. Kids who diet can end up weighing more than non-dieters, have lower self-esteem and are at greater risk of eating disorders. Instead, focus on developing healthy habits for life.

Use Canada's Food Guide to plan healthy meals

- Incorporate whole grains such as whole grain breads, pasta, brown or wild rice.
- Try plant sources of protein such as nuts, seeds, dried beans, peas or lentils.
- Choose lean meat, fish, poultry (without skin).
- Make $\frac{1}{2}$ your plate vegetables and fruit.

Be Active As A Family

Kids need 60 minutes of physical activity every day. Plan family activities that get everyone moving such as biking, skating, going for a walk after dinner, throwing a ball or frisbee around, or going to the playground together.

Family Meals

Eating together as a family gives you a chance to connect. Kids who eat with their families make healthier food choices.

Eat Breakfast

It can be as simple as a piece of fruit and some yogurt, peanut butter on toast with banana, or oatmeal with milk and frozen berries.

Enjoy Fruits And Vegetables

Serve fruits and vegetables at every meal and snack. Fresh, frozen, dried and canned all contribute to good health.

Keep Family Meal Time Relaxed

Sometimes it takes children a while to accept a new food. This is normal. Never try to force or bribe your kids to eat their food, as this usually backfires. For more information check out:

<https://www.ellynsatterinstitute.org/>

Get Your Kids Involved In Cooking

Young children can help wash vegetables and fruit in the sink, and add ingredients to dishes. As they get older, they can build on their skills and develop confidence in their ability to make healthy meals and snacks.

Don't Forbid Foods or Use Food As A Reward

All foods can be part of a healthy diet. Labelling food as "junk" or forbidding certain foods can result in your child craving that food or trying to "sneak it in" when they are away from you. Talk to your kids about *everyday* foods that our bodies need to grow and stay healthy and *sometimes* foods that are OK to have in moderation.

Encourage Mindful Eating

Ask your kids what it feels like to be very hungry, a little bit hungry, comfortably full and uncomfortably full. Discuss the importance of trusting and listening to hunger and fullness cues.

Eating Out

Restaurant meals are often high in fat, salt and calories, and should be considered "sometimes foods". Try to choose a meal that includes 3 different food groups; avoid super sizing your portions, eat slowly and take time to enjoy your meal. Restaurants often serve big portions so encourage your kids (and yourself) to "listen to their stomach." It's OK to ask for smaller portions, share a meal or take leftovers home.

Screen Time

Ban screens at meal time. This helps the whole family focus on their food and each other. Remove televisions and video games from bedrooms to ensure your child gets enough sleep.

Make Water Your Drink Of Choice

Fruit juice, soft drinks, fruit punches contain sugar and are low in nutrients, so consider them a sometimes food.



If you are concerned about your child or your family's lifestyle habits, a referral to a Registered Dietitian may help. Check out: www.unlockfood.ca, www.dietitians.ca and www.ellynsatterinstitute.org

Sources:

<https://www.eatright.org/health/weight-loss/your-health-and-your-weight/helping-kids-maintain-a-healthy-body-weight-a-cheat-sheet-for-success>

<https://www.unlockfood.ca/en/Articles/Child-Toddler-Nutrition/Cooking-with-Kids.aspx>

<https://www.ellynsatterinstitute.org/family-meals-focus/84-the-vegetable-agenda-getting-children-to-eat-nutritious-food/>

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