

Healthy Lifestyle: Helpful Ideas from Parents

“Healthy lifestyle seems to encompass everything that you want and hope for within yourself and your family—the exercise, eating, the sleeping; just a balance of everything, the total picture.”

Mother from Wenatchee



Make Changes to be Healthy

Part of having a healthy lifestyle includes eating healthy foods and staying active. These good habits can help *your* family say:

- We have more energy.
- We feel good about ourselves.
- We sleep better.
- We feel more relaxed.
- We are doing our part to prevent heart disease, cancer, Type 2 diabetes and obesity.

Even though you may know about these benefits, it can be hard to get started to make changes. Things like our daily pace, fast food and TV and video games get in the way. The parent's role in making changes is the key factor for success. The tips in this handout come from parents and grandparents just like you. Choose one or two that sound good for you and your family to try.

Taking the First Step

Healthy people come in all shapes and sizes. How people feel about weight, body types, food and exercise varies. Take a look at your feelings and beliefs about food and exercise. Ask yourself:

- Are desserts “bad”?
- Are there certain foods that are not “good”?
- Do I eat when I feel sad or angry?
- If I feel stressed, am I less active?

Know your own feelings and beliefs about food and exercise. Teach your children healthy habits and pass on healthy beliefs and feelings about food and being active. Get out of the habit of thinking that foods are “good” or “bad.”

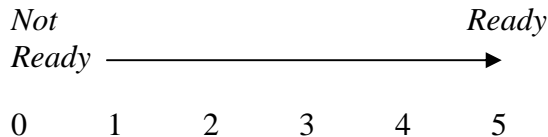
Children's

Hospital & Regional Medical Center
Seattle, Washington

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Is Your Family Ready to Make Changes for Good Health?

Mark on the scale:



If you scored 0 to 1—You may want to learn more about making small changes for a healthy lifestyle. Reading this handout is a good start.

For 2 to 3—You may just not know where to start. Look at the library, talk with your doctor or check with your community center.

For 4 to 5—You are ready. Try one or more of the tips in this handout. Try for one month and then ask your family what they think.

“While a child may never listen to you, they will never fail to imitate you.”

Grandmother from Seattle

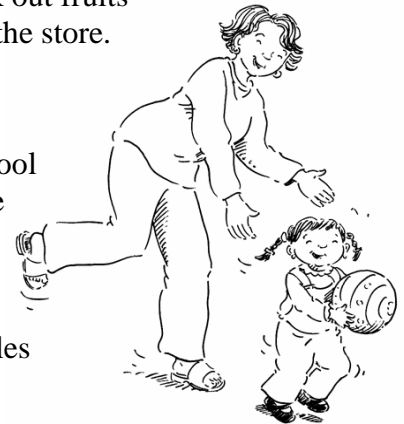
Tips for Success

- Change begins with you.
- Change works best when the whole family is involved.
- Be a role model. Your children will notice that you are eating healthy and being active.
- And, be sure to explain to your children about why you are making lifestyle changes.

“I changed my eating habits and included my girls.”

Mother from Seattle

- Eat together—this helps children learn about portion sizes and healthy choices. They also get to practice stopping eating when they are full.
- Try not to use food to reward, bribe, comfort, solve problems or punish your child.
- Teach your child to eat high-fat or high-sugar foods just once in a while. Eat high-fat, high-sugar foods with something healthy (like a donut with a glass of milk).
- Keep healthy snacks around.
- Help children pick out fruits and vegetables at the store.
- Cut up fruits and vegetables and set them out after school or while you make dinner. They will be eaten faster than whole fruits and vegetables in the fridge.



- Try quick and healthy breakfasts:
 - Cereal, dried fruit and nuts
 - Waffle with low-fat yogurt and fruit on top
 - Smoothie with low-fat yogurt, milk and fruit
 - Banana with peanut butter

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Tips for Success, continued

- Make meals more healthy while keeping the flavor:
 - Cook meat, chill in the fridge with no cover; skim off the fat before using in a recipe.
 - Use egg whites instead of whole eggs.
 - Use steamed rice instead of frying rice.
 - Use applesauce for half of the oil in baked goods.
 - Use vegetable cooking spray or half the amount of oil when making refried beans.
 - Add a can of vegetables to soups and sauces.
- Combine food groups. This will satisfy hunger best. Include foods from each food group at every meal.
 - Milk/Dairy (milk, yogurt, cheese)
 - Meat/Protein (meat, fish, poultry, tofu, dry cooked beans, eggs, and nuts)
 - Fruits/Vegetables
 - Breads/Grains (bread, cereal, rice, and pasta)
- Try new flavors or spices in your food. Adding flavor can provide a greater sense of satisfaction when eating.
- Drink water. Keep water bottles in the car to prevent stopping for soda.

- Make small changes in your routine to add activity. Walk instead of driving. Take the stairs.
- Focus on fun, not skill.
- Find fun things to do together.
- Being active does not mean you have to be an athlete or in sports.
- Be active with your child. Don't nag or pressure your child to exercise.
- Focus on what your child does well, not on how she looks.
- Tell your child you want him to be healthy, not thin.
- Ask your children for their ideas on how to be more active.



Making changes can be hard. It takes time to build new habits. Support your family as they strive to make healthy lifestyle choices.

For More Information

- Children's Obesity Action Team
(206) 987-2626
- Your health care provider
- Children's Resource Line:
(206) 987-2500 or 1-866-987-2500
toll-free Washington, Alaska, Montana, Idaho
- www.seattlechildrens.org

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Children's Hospital. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's health care provider.

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