

eHouseCall

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A Monthly Electronic Newsletter from HealthLink

Doctor's
Bag



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HLInfo YOUR MONTHLY GUIDE TO
HEALTH CARE AWARENESS

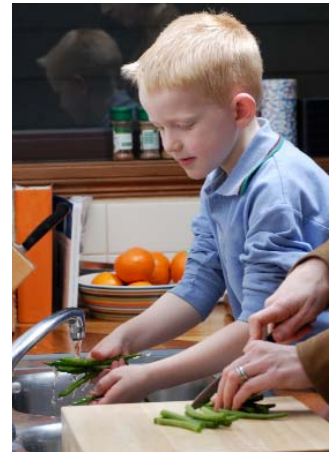
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Healthy Eating Tips for Families

The following is an excerpt from the 2006 Nutrition Fact Sheet, "What's a Mom to Do? Healthy Eating Tips for Families." The fact sheet is published by the American Dietetic Association.

Moms have a wealth of concerns when it comes to their children's eating habits. The top concern, shared by more than 4-in-10 moms, is that kids are not eating enough fruits and vegetables. What's a mom to do? Start with these easy, practical tips:

- ♦ **Make mealtime family time.** Eating meals as a family can actually improve your children's food habits since kids tend to eat more fruits, vegetables and dairy foods at meals shared with their parents.
- ♦ **Get the family involved in meal planning and preparation.** Give kids simple tasks to help with family food shopping, preparation and cleanup. Children are more likely to eat food that they have helped to prepare.
- ♦ **Be a good role model.** Moms and dads often tell their kids to eat healthy but don't follow the advice for themselves. Healthy eating is a lifestyle - not a fad.
- ♦ **Try something new.** Set a goal to include one new food or recipe each week. You'll soon discover new favorites to incorporate into family menus. When you want your children to eat more fruits and vegetables, try a new or exotic variety like mangoes or tangelos. To make fruit easier to eat, serve it in bite-sized pieces with some yogurt for delicious dipping!
- ♦ **Freshness and quality are key.** Opt for fresh, quality products when choosing foods for your family. Fresher foods provide higher amounts of essential nutrients and taste better when they're at their peak. Buy fruits and vegetables in season to stretch your food dollar, too.
- ♦ **Stash healthy snacks.** Keep healthy, nutritious snacks in key places at all times – your purse, the car, your desk drawer. As you run out the door, grab a few healthy snacks – crackers and peanut butter, small boxes of cereal, fresh fruit, pretzels or plain popcorn.
- ♦ **Think creatively to adapt to your family's schedule.** Try changing the time of your meals so you can have at least four family meals per week. Accommodate a busy schedule by working in time for a meal. For example, have a tailgate picnic before or after a game or practice.
- ♦ **Face dining out challenges head-on.** Choose restaurants that allow you to mix and match food options that give you the control to create a balanced meal for you and your family.
- ♦ **Be informed when dining out.** Visit restaurant web sites or call ahead to find out information about their menu. Some web sites provide nutrition breakdowns for menu items.
- ♦ **Get help from a nutrition expert.** A registered dietitian (RD) is uniquely qualified to help families improve their eating habits. Whether it's special challenges like picky eaters or health issues such as weight management, an RD can provide a personalized guide to healthy eating for your family.



Healthy Living is a Family Affair

The American Academy of Pediatrics states, "The majority of U.S. youth are of healthy weight, but the majority of U.S. adults are overweight or obese."

Here's my take – too many healthy U.S. children have grown up to become overweight and obese adults. We, as adults, need to set a better example for our kids when it comes to healthy living.

Diet

The tips listed in this issue are a great starting point but change doesn't occur overnight. Be committed to a long-term plan of action. Be consistent and practice what you preach.

Exercise

This is a great time of year to be outside. Try a family hike, bicycle ride or game of softball. Go to the park, walk the dog – get out and have some healthy fun as a family.

Stress and Overeating

Emotional well-being is as much a part of a healthy lifestyle as diet and exercise. According to Kathleen M. Zelman, MPH, RD, LD, a WebMD weight loss expert, "Experts estimate that 75% of us overeat not because we are hungry, but rather in response to feelings." Instead of snacking, try exercise or quality time with the family.

Working together as a family builds strong bodies and strong minds – and it sets an example for your children and generations to come.

Talk to Your Doctor

If you think your family could benefit from a regimen of healthy eating and exercise – not to mention some good old fashioned togetherness – talk to your family doctor or other health care professional.

This fact sheet and more information about healthy living for families can be accessed from the HealthLink web site, www.healthlink.com. Click on the "I am a health plan participant" link and then select "Healthy Habits for Healthy Kids" on the health plan participant home page.

Source: The American Dietetic Association, Healthy Habits for Healthy Kids, Nutrition Fact Sheet, "What a Mom to Do? Healthy Eating Tips for Families" 2006; http://www.healthlink.com/healthy_kids/index.html; American Academy of Pediatrics, PEDIATRICS Vol. 120 Supplement December 2007, pp. S229-S253 (doi:10.1542/peds.2007-2329E)

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