

Healthy Habits for Healthy Kids

As a parent, one of the most important things you can do is ensure that your child has a host of healthy habits in their life. From eating healthy to exercising to regular visits to the doctor or dentist, there are many things parents can do to help their kids get off to a good start in life.

Good Nutrition

- Many studies have shown that children who do not eat a good breakfast can have greater difficulties behaving and learning in school. Take time every morning to prepare your child a good breakfast. Even a bowl of cereal with a glass of juice can make a big difference!
- Children are notoriously picky. Getting them to eat a wide variety of foods to meet their daily nutritional goals can be a challenge. Provide your child with a multivitamin designed just for kids. This will help your child get in all their daily vitamins and minerals.
- Eat dinner together as a family. Eating in front of the television or away from a table takes the focus off the purpose of eating – to get nutrition. Taking time for family dinners allows you to model good eating behaviors, learn more about your child's eating habits, and it gives you great time to talk to your kids one-on-one.
- Pack a nutritious lunch for your child each day or talk with them about the menu at school and take time to teach them what is healthy and what is not. Let them know that you care about what they are eating and help them make healthy choices.
- Keep healthy snacks around the house. You do not have to buy chips, cookies, and ice cream. Limit them to special occasions and encourage a love of fresh fruits and vegetables in your child.

Physical Fitness

- Make physical fitness a family affair. Take family walks after dinner or plan weekend activities that get everyone moving and having fun.
- Help your kids find their athletic talents. Not every child will be a great basketball player but every child can find a fun way to participate.
- Emphasize fitness and fun. Spending an hour climbing the jungle gym can build as much physical fitness as playing a sport.
- Encourage your children to go outdoors and play. It is all too easy to let children turn into couch potatoes playing video games all day. Once they are outside, you will be amazed at what they can do with just their imagination!

Health Care

- Make and keep regular well-child visits at the doctor. Though your children do not need as many doctor visits as when they were toddlers, it is still a good idea to have your family doctor do a well-child check up once a year.
- Help your child learn healthy habits such as using a tissue when they sneeze, flossing their teeth properly, and regular hand washing.
- Make and keep regular dentist appointments. Issues with teeth can be a precursor to many different physical health issues.
- Take your child to the doctor anytime you have a concern about their well-being. Many doctors partner with community agencies and they can refer you to a wide array of services that could benefit your child.