

Show Your Children How to Live a Healthy Life

It is never too early or too late to address the health of your family.

Here are a few ideas for showing your children how to live a healthy life.

As a parent, the things you do and say have a tremendous influence on your child's behavior. Encourage your child to maintain a healthy life style by "talking the talk and walking the walk." Don't know where to start? Here are a few ideas.

Eat Right



There are many ways to assure that you have a healthful diet. One is to get enough fruit and vegetables each day—a growing body of research shows that fruits and vegetables are critical to promoting good health. To get the amount that's recommended, most people need to increase the amount of fruits and vegetables they currently eat.

Here are some helpful actions:

- Keep a bowl of fresh fruit on your kitchen counter.
- Place a box of raisins in your child's backpack and in your briefcase.
- Add strawberries, blueberries or bananas to your cereal, oatmeal, or toast.
- Read more about nutrition for everyone in your family.

Engage in Physical Activity

Regular physical activity is important for all age groups. Being active helps control your weight, strengthen your bones and muscles, improve your mental health and mood, and reduce your risk of many life-threatening diseases.



Action steps:

- Encourage your children to be active for at least one hour a day.
- Set a positive example by leading an active life style yourself.
- Take family walks or play active games together.
- Read more about physical activity guidelines.

Take Care of Your Teeth

Did you know that even though tooth decay is largely preventable it affects millions of Americans each year? Untreated cavities can cause pain, inability to eat comfortably or chew well, and embarrassment over discolored and damaged teeth—problems that can greatly affect the self-esteem and quality of life of both children and adults.

Action steps:

- Use fluoride toothpaste.
- Drink fluoridated water when available.
- Schedule oral health examinations for yourself and your child as recommended by your dentist.
- Learn more about protecting your oral health.

Avoid Tobacco Use

Avoiding all forms of tobacco will reduce the chance that your children will grow up using tobacco themselves. Cigarettes, cigars, and spit tobacco—as well as the chemicals found in second-hand smoke—hurt your health. Babies who are around tobacco smoke have weaker lungs than other babies. They are more likely to have other health problems, such as infections, and more frequent asthma attacks. Being around cigarette smoke is also one of the suspected causes of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). There is no risk-free level of exposure to second-hand smoke, and eliminating smoking in indoor spaces is the only way to protect nonsmokers completely from second-hand smoke.



Action steps:

- If you use tobacco, you can obtain free quitting support at 1-800-QUITNOW (1-800-784-8669).
- Don't allow smoking in your home or car.
- Talk to your children about avoiding tobacco use.
- Learn more about Youth Tobacco Prevention.



It is never too early or too late to address the health of your family. CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion supports a variety of activities that improve the health of children and adults by preventing chronic diseases and their risk factors. For an overview of how the Center works to protect your family's health, from before conception and throughout the life cycle, read *Ties That Bind* in the January 2009 issue of *Preventing Chronic Disease Journal*. ♡

Content source: National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Update January 12, 2009