



Healthy Eating and Physical Activity



Encouraging your child to develop healthy habits now can set them up for a lifetime of health, regardless of their ability. Health looks different for every family and can be tricky to navigate. Here are some simple Dos and Don'ts to keeping your family healthy.

✓ Dos

✗ Don'ts

Set realistic goals for you and your family. No one knows your child like you. Be sure the goals that you set are within reach of your child. Set small, achievable goals (such as adding 1 serving more of vegetables to every dinner) as opposed to an entire lifestyle overhaul all at once.



Make staying active fun and engaging. Playing games indoors or outdoors is a great way to promote movement. Whatever the activity, it should be joyous to participate in for everyone.

Try to keep meals balanced and colorful. A good rule of thumb is to fill half the plate with fruits and vegetables and the other half with grains and protein. Eating a rainbow of colors can make eating fun and provides various nutrients with many health benefits.

Start with changing your own health habits. A great way to get your child to develop healthy habits is to make those habits your own first. Be intentional with your choices and verbalize the benefits in front of your child. "I love the way I feel after we play basketball together, it was so much fun!"



Getting Started



Exercise



Nutrition



Model

Be discouraged. Changing a routine to be a healthier one is incredibly challenging. It is easy to become discouraged after a few setbacks, but keep in mind that any progress is good progress. There is always time to reevaluate and try to reach your health goals again.

Use exercise as punishment. Physical activity can become associated with negative emotions if used as a way to punish your child. Encourage your child to exercise for its many health benefits instead.



Bribe or punish with food. Using dessert as a reward can lead to an obsession with sugary treats at the expense of trying other foods. Consider serving dessert with the rest of dinner to demystify it.

"Do as I say, not as I do". Your child will model your behavior, whether it's good or bad. Having family meals where everyone is eating the same thing and planning activities that promote physical activities to do as a family encourages healthy habits and lessens potential power struggles.

For more information about healthy eating, visit <https://www.myplate.gov/>.

For more information about inclusive physical activity, visit <https://www.nchpad.org/>



References:
<https://www.nchpad.org/>
<https://www.myplate.gov/>
<https://health.gov/our-work/food-nutrition/2015-2020-dietary-guidelines/guidelines/appendix-1/>
<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/habits.html>

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