

You Have the Power to Improve Your Family's Health and Well-Being:

A Coaching Guide for Parents



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Healthy habits begin early in life. Work with your children and teens to make healthy choices. If you have healthy habits, they will too.

Start Simple



Tips:

- 1. Avoid sugary drinks.** Drink water instead of sugary drinks.
- 2. Step away from the screen and move.** Dance, go for a walk or play an active game.
- 3. Make mealtime family time.** Cook and eat with your children.



1. Avoid Sugary Drinks

Juice drinks; soda; sweetened iced teas, energy and sports drinks are all sugary drinks. Sugary drinks are the biggest source of added sugar in our diets. Just one 20-ounce soda has 250 calories and more than 16 teaspoons of sugar. In New York City, nearly 30 percent of children drink one or more sugary drinks per day.



Tips for avoiding sugary drinks:

- Pack a whole piece of fruit in your child's lunch instead of a juice drink or 100% fruit juice. Remember: 100% fruit juice is still full of natural sugar and calories.
- Give only breast milk, formula and water to infants.
- Serve water and plain (unsweetened) skim or 1% milk to children.
- Keep only healthy beverages, such as water, seltzer, unsweetened iced tea and low-fat or fat-free plain milk in your fridge. Store New York City tap water in a reusable water bottle; NYC water is free and tastes delicious.
- Don't order blended coffee drinks, which can have a lot of sugar, calories and caffeine.
- Make smoothies at home without added sugar.

2. Step Away From the Screen and Move

On average, children and teens between the ages of 8 and 18 spend up to seven and a half hours a day using media, such as TV, computers, tablets or cell phones. People tend to be inactive while using screens.



Tips for stepping away from the screen and moving:

- Move together as a family every night. Dance, play an active indoor game or go for a walk after dinner.
- Get off the subway or bus at an earlier stop with your children and walk the rest of the way.
- Have your family help with the housework. Vacuuming and other household chores are a great way to burn calories.

3. Make Mealtime Family Time

In today's world of fast food and busy schedules, it's not always easy to find a healthy balance. Make mealtime family time whenever possible. Shop, cook and eat healthy foods with your children. Involving children in these activities will help them make healthy choices now and in the future.



Tips for making mealtime family time:

- Schedule meals and snacks. This way, your family will know when to expect meals and won't snack on unhealthy foods beforehand.
- Start with the right-sized plate. Most plates are 9 inches across, but a 7-inch plate is better for young children.
 - Allow young children to serve themselves. Most children ages 3 and older can serve themselves with adult supervision.
 - Fill half of a child's plate with fruits and vegetables. A quarter of their plate should be lean protein and a quarter should be whole grains or starches.
- Set healthy examples for your family. Eat vegetables and your kids will too.
- Patience works better than pressure. Offer your family fruits and vegetables many times and in different ways.
- When eating out, choose the small portion. If the portion is still large, share it or take half home for later.
- Children should be encouraged, but never forced to eat.



How to Talk About Food With Your Children of All Ages

Your words are powerful, even if you think your children are not listening. How you talk about food, weight and physical activity can make all the difference. Here are some ways you can personalize and talk about these topics with your children, at any age.

1. Do not use food as a reward or punishment.

- 👎 **Instead of saying:** "Since you behaved yourself at the store, you can have a piece of cake."
- 👍 **Say:** "I'm so proud of you! You acted so politely in the store today. Let's go to the park and have some fun."
- 👎 **Instead of saying:** "No ice cream tonight because you didn't eat your veggies."
- 👍 **Say:** "Are you sure you don't want to try some of these veggies? They are really delicious!"



2. Avoid using shame and talking to your kids about their weight. Instead, work together with your child to make healthy choices about food and physical activity.

- 🗨️ **Instead of saying:** "Those chips are fattening and you shouldn't eat them."
- 👍 **Say:** "Chips don't keep our bodies strong or give us the energy to learn and play. Let's choose something else like yogurt or an apple."
- 🗨️ **Instead of saying:** "You should exercise because I'm worried about your weight."
- 👍 **Say:** "Instead of playing video games, why don't you and your friends go outside and shoot some hoops?"



3. Recognize how important sleep is in building healthy habits.

- 👎 **Instead of saying:** "Sure, you can stay up late. I never needed a lot of sleep so you won't either."
- 👍 **Say:** "I know you want to stay up late, but you're still growing. A full night's sleep can help you maintain a healthy weight, and do well in school."

4. Support older children in making healthy choices on their own. Model the choices you want them to make and acknowledge their efforts to take care of themselves.

- 👎 **Instead of saying:** "You shouldn't buy soda today."
- 👍 **Say:** "You're getting so independent! It's great watching you make healthy choices like drinking water."



The words you use around your children matter. Teach them that the healthy choices they make now will affect them today and in the future.

- "When you eat nutritious foods, drink water and exercise, you'll feel great. You can do so much in life."
- "When I look back at my childhood, I see that we ate too many unhealthy foods, and several of our family members had health problems because of it. I don't want that to happen to us. We can eat healthy and stay healthy."

Remember, you have the power! You and your family can make healthy choices.





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