



# TIPS FOR RAISING HEALTHY CHILDREN:

## Feeding Your Kids Healthy Snacks & Modeling Healthy Patterns

Everyone is aware of the alarming statistics of childhood obesity and unhealthy eating and lifestyle habits being exhibited by our children. At a recent visit to my doctor's office I saw on their medical TV a video that discussed our children's health today and the terrible fact that kids ages birth to 16yrs of age will not surpass the age of death of their parent's generation. Despite major advances in medical technology and modern medicine, obesity is the leading cause of death and will be the leading factor and root cause of death in our children today. According to this video, the abundance of sodas, fast food, processed food and a very sedentary lifestyle are very much to blame.

It made me think about the question many parents face: How do you raise healthy kids in our busy world? Here are a few statistics that are important to note:

**1.** If one parent habitually eats high fat food, the child is twice as likely to be overweight.

**2.** If both parents eat high fat foods, the child is three to six times more likely to be overweight.

**3.** When both parents are physically active, the child is six times more likely to be physically active.

As parents and the caregiver in the family, you are the primary individuals spending your money on grocery shopping and buying the family's meals. It is essential for parents to demonstrate and model the most appropriate and acceptable lifestyle and dietary choices. Healthy fruits, vegetables and "snacky" foods must be available for kids. Avoiding processed foods and high sugar, high fat foods is essential to keep in mind when shopping.

Snacking is a huge source of children's poor diet choices. It is key for parents to involve their children in this integral part of their health.

Here's a guide to healthy snacking with your kids health and taste buds in mind.

**1. READ THE INGREDIENT LIST.** Words like hydrogenated oil, high fructose corn syrup and "enriched" signify harmful fats and empty calories. And if you can't pronounce the main ingredients on the list, the snack product is probably best left on the shelf.

If a snack provides 25 percent of a child's total calories, parents should aim for no more than 600 mg of sodium and between 10 and 15 grams of fat per snack. Sugar is tough because nutrition labels don't distinguish between naturally occurring sugar and added sugar. You don't want to restrict sugar from whole fruits, veggies or skim or low-fat milk. For sugar, scan the ingredient list and steer clear of snacks with high fructose corn syrup in the first few ingredients.

**2. LOOK FOR SNACKS THAT ARE HIGH IN FIBER.** Kids aren't getting enough fiber. Seek out foods with whole grain. Switch from regular pasta to whole wheat, for example. And if your kids turn up their noses, try mixing whole wheat pasta with regular for a smoother transition.

**3. PAY ATTENTION TO SERVING SIZES.** Many jumbo chip bags have between three and five servings in one bag, which can really add up. Look for single snack servings that have between 100 and 200 calories to keep calorie counts and fat grams in check.

**4. OFFER HEALTHY CHOICES.** And don't give up if they turn food away on the first try. It might take 10 to 15 times for your child to try a certain food, but don't give up. Often if they are involved in the preparation of food, they will try something new.

A growing problem in many communities is a lack of sidewalks, parks, biking trails, and community-sponsored recreation. Access to community gardens, farmers' markets, and healthy vending or concession options also is limited. It is key to get outside with your kids for playtime. Show your children good, fun healthy exercise habits and they will model these as they grow into teens and young adults.



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