



Healthy LIFESTYLE TIPS

EAT MEALS WITH YOUR FAMILY

Family meals lower a child's risk of depression, obesity and drug use. Children who eat dinner with their family often do better in school and feel better about themselves.

- Turn off the TV and keep phones, tablets, and games away from the table
- Avoid continuous snacking between meals – especially after school and after dinner

BE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE!

Children and teens need at least 20-60 minutes of activity each day. If your child is not very active now, start slowly. Set a goal of just 10 minutes each day.

- Tip: The best activities are ones that you enjoy!
- Ideas to increase activity:
 - Be active as a family. Set times to play, walk, dance and bike together.
 - Take the stairs instead of the elevator
 - Walk to school, if it is safe
 - Look for parks, playgrounds, schools and tracks for walking and jogging
 - Hike as a family
- Tip: Mix up the kind of activity you do
 - Exercise to help your heart and lungs (jog, bike, dance, hike) and to build stronger muscles (do push-ups, sit-ups, squats, use stretch bands)
 - Both kinds of active play will help your child with weight, heart health and to lower their risk of diabetes

BE SURE TO SLEEP

Sleep is more important than you may think.

- Children who get enough sleep often:
 - Have a healthier weight (not getting enough sleep can increase food cravings)
 - Do better in school
 - Exercise more
 - Have a better mood and behavior
- Number of hours needed each night by age:
 - Toddler (1-2 years) - 12-14 hours, including naps
 - Preschool (aged 3-5 years) – 11-12 hours, including naps
 - (*Daytime naps typically end after 5 years of age*)
 - School Age (6-12 years) – 10-11 hours
 - Teens (13-18 years) - 8-10 hours
- Tips for better sleep habits:
 - Help your child keep a bedtime routine (shower, brush teeth, read, etc.)
 - Remove all TVs, cell phones and tablets from your child's bedroom
 - Older children and teens should not nap during the day. It makes it difficult to fall asleep at bedtime
 - Keep weekend sleep habits close to weekday bedtimes and routines. Staying up later on weekends can harm a child's sleep schedule
 - Avoid caffeine!



TUNE OUT

Electronics are everywhere. Set time for yourself and your children to turn off and put down electronics (TV, phones, tablets, computers, video games).

- Set a family rule that screen time is limited to 2 hours or less a day, aside from use for schoolwork
- Instead of more screen time, go for a walk, play a game, get your children involved in chores such as cleaning, mowing the lawn or doing laundry

GET YOUR KIDS INVOLVED

Children are more likely to try new healthy foods that they have shopped for and cooked.

- Learning to shop and cook helps children to build grown up skills
- Try one new food or recipe per week as a family
- Let your children be creative. Let them pick and help cook the healthy meal



DON'T USE FOOD AND DRINKS AS REWARDS

Instead of using food or “treats” as a reward for good behavior or good grades, celebrate with a fun activity that your child would like.

- Ideas:
 - Go to the park or the batting cages
 - Give them a pass on a chore
 - Let them pick the game on family game night
 - Treat them to a movie

BE A MODEL... A ROLE MODEL

Children learn how and what to eat from watching their parents. Eat slowly and enjoy healthy foods and drinks such as fruits, veggies, whole grains, healthy proteins, water and low-fat milk.

- Tip: Be positive. Avoid speaking badly about yourself, your body or your eating and exercise habits
- Tip: Talk to your kids about healthy habits. Offer to try new activities and healthy foods with them
- Start with simple changes for your family:
 - Leave fresh fruit out on the table in place of candy or sweets
 - Bring veggies and dip to a party to have a healthy snack
 - Make water your drink of choice – add fruit for a splash of flavor!
 - Pack healthy snacks when on the go so you don't have to stop for fast food



***For more healthy lifestyle and eating tips
visit our Nutrition Services page at
www.connecticutchildrens.org***