Promote Healthy Habits Early

Childhood is a time when habits are formed. One important role as a parent is to teach healthy habits that will stay with your child for a lifetime. What’s the best way to do this? Be a good role model yourself, and teach by example.

Healthy Habit #1...Eat a nutritious breakfast every morning.

Breakfast is an important start to a day. It gives the body the fuel it needs to work hard, think, and learn. This is especially important for children so they can do well in school.

A healthy breakfast should include 3 or more food groups, like a grain food, a source of protein (meat or dairy), and a fruit or vegetable.

**Beyond Cereal: Quick Breakfast Ideas**

- Oatmeal with fruit and milk
- English muffin and peanut butter, and some juice
- Egg, turkey and cheese on toast
- Yogurt layered with fruit and granola or cereal (can be made ahead)

Healthy Habit #2...Enjoy fruits and vegetables with meals and snacks throughout the day.

It is good to have plenty of fruits and vegetables on hand when hunger strikes. When a child sees others grabbing fruit for a snack, or filling a plate with vegetables, they begin to do the same. Remember that kids have small hands and mouths, so make portions small. Also peel and cut up fruits and vegetables into easy-to-chew sizes so kids are more likely to eat them. Limit juice servings to six ounces per day, and serve meals and snacks at regular times so kids are not grazing on foods and drinks all day.
Healthy Habit #3...Make physical activity a family affair.

We know now that being physically active is as important as eating a healthy diet. Kids should see their parents play, too! Children need at least 60 minutes of activity each day, and no more than two hours of screen time. Screen time includes the television, video games, and computer. So next time you come home from work, turn the TV off and be active with your child.

Tip: Offer Often

Everyone has certain foods that they like more than others. Children are the same way. However, if a parent offers a variety of foods early in childhood, the child may grow up to like more of them. It can take a child several times to realize they like the taste of a certain food. So, it is recommended to offer a new food six or seven times before deciding the child does not like that food.

YOU as a Positive Role Model!

☉ Kids copy what they see and hear
☉ That’s why it is so important for parents to show healthy habits.

Value of family meals

If you can, have dinner as a family. Research shows that when families eat together at the dinner table, instead of alone or in front of the TV, the meals include more fruits and vegetables and low fat options.

Website of the Month

Fun resources for parents and kids!
Dole Nutrition
www.dolesuperkids.com

Sources:
Dairy Council of California (www.mealsmatter.org)
Kids Health (www.kidshealth.org)
Department of Health and Human Services (www.cdc.gov/nccdphp)
Colorado State University Extension (www.ext.colostate.edu)

This material was funded by USDA’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – SNAP. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, contact your local DHS office, or call the URI SNAP-Ed nutrition program at 1-877-Food-URI (1-877-366-3874). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.