



Four Ways to Help Your Kids Make Healthy Choices

It's no secret that children, like all people, have minds of their own. As parents, it's up to us to make sure we give them the right tools to make good decisions. The following are a few ways you can teach your children how to use good judgment when it comes to their health.

Eat Well

We know what we're supposed to eat: fresh fruit and vegetables, whole grains, and healthy proteins. To kids, this can seem less exciting than unhealthy foods like processed desserts and high-sodium snacks. [Encourage](#) them to eat healthily by having them help with [planning](#) and meal prep and by offering them a variety of healthy snacks. Make sure you're also eating healthily so that your kids can follow your example. One way to model healthy eating is by demonstrating portion control. Determine how much food you should be eating by weighing it with a kitchen scale. Make sure you learn about the cool features that come with current models before you decide which one to buy.

Get Them Exercising

If something doesn't seem "fun," children may not be motivated to do it. That's why it's a good idea to make exercise [entertaining](#). If you have a dog, encourage your kids to walk him. Have a group playdate for an active [outdoor](#) event, like a game of soccer or swimming at the pool. Play with your kids. Just like with food, your children may get bored of doing the same activity repeatedly. Rotate what you do and don't be afraid of being spontaneous. A random trip to the park on the weekend can be an opportunity for adventure, fun, and exercise all at once. Ask your children what they enjoy doing or what they want to do this weekend to get out of the house. By giving them choice and opportunity, you can get them thinking about exercise and play, and this may make it even more fun for them.

Model Behavior

Often, our children question why they must do the things we ask of them. When we ourselves don't [model](#) the behavior we require of them, we undermine ourselves and our teachings. Again, show them it's important to eat healthily by eating healthily yourself. Don't insist they join a sports team without showing them that exercise is important by exercising and staying active. It's all too easy to talk the talk without walking the walk, as the saying goes. If you don't enjoy running, no matter how beneficial it is for you, you're not going to want to go run. So, just like we need to encourage our children to find an aerobic activity they enjoy, we need to enjoy what we do so our children can see it. If they see us loving our bodies, respecting ourselves, and having fun while we do it, they may be more likely to want to copy these behaviors.

Another way to model good behavior is to follow through with any checkups you may have. For example, if your child sees you go to the dentist on a regular basis, he or she may not feel overwhelmed when they need to go. So, if you don't have a regular dentist, [find one online](#) and schedule an appointment. That way, when your child needs a checkup, the stress and anxiety associated with the visit might stay at a minimum.

Limit Stress

Being healthy is more than just taking care of our bodies. When you are stressed, your children will be able to tell and will probably feel that tension themselves. Therefore, it's important to keep your home a stress-free environment, as much as you can. This includes keeping adult items safe from children at all times so that no accidents happen. [Spending time](#) with your family, even sharing little things together throughout the day, can help keep kids happy. If you do notice your child seems upset, [talk](#) to him or her about it. Be gentle as you do so, as talking about emotions can be difficult, even for children. Take the time to really actively listen to what they say. Then, once they've been able to discuss what they feel and why, try to help them think of ways they can change their situation. Again, don't tell them how but help them come to their own conclusions.

In addition to daily stress, children can become anxious during times of change in their lives. Even exciting rites of passage, like getting a job or learning to drive, can cause your child stress.

The best thing you can do in these situations is give them all the knowledge they need to be successful. Before they get that first paycheck, [teach them](#) about taxes and social security, so they know what to expect as far as deductions. You can also take them to the bank to help them open a checking and savings account. Likewise, before they head to the DMV, teach them some car insurance 101 so they know the basics about [how car insurance works](#) and what steps to take if they get into an accident. By walking them through these situations, you can ease their fears and reduce their stress.

Kids follow how parents behave. Show them how to be healthy and live that life together. By keeping everyone involved, you'll not only have more fun, but children will feel important and have an easier time making healthy choices.

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