

Tips for Raising Kids with Healthy Habits

Parents play a major role in helping children grow up with healthy habits. Teaching your children to enjoy healthy eating and physical activity at a young age sets them on the path to healthy living for life. Keep these key tips in mind:

Eat a balanced breakfast each day

Children who eat breakfast tend to have healthier weights. A balanced breakfast includes foods from at least three of the four food groups in Canada's Food Guide. Try these ideas:

Wake up a little earlier so you will have more time for breakfast together.

Keep a variety of whole grain breads and cereals on hand to combine with milk or fortified soy beverages, yogurt and fruit.

Try fruit "smoothies" made with milk or fortified soy beverage, yogurt and fresh or frozen fruit.

Check out this video of [quick and easy breakfast ideas](#).

Teach children to make wise food choices.

Offer children a variety of foods from the four food groups in Canada's Food Guide. Teach them that some foods are 'every day' foods and others are 'sometimes' foods.

Make sure most of their choices are foods from Canada's Food Guide like whole grains, fruit, vegetables and low fat dairy products.

Make 'sometimes foods' like French fries, candy, chips and pop available only once in a while.

Give your child a chance to make some simple food choices from a young age. For example, 'would you like an apple or a banana?'

Get great tips on using Canada's Food Guide [here](#).

Foster a healthy relationship with food

Trust your child to know when he or she is hungry or full.

Avoid telling your kids to finish everything on their plate. This teaches them to eat even when they're already full.

Avoid using food as a reward or punishment which could lead to overeating or poor choices.

Let your child decide when he or she has eaten enough or feels like more.

Involve your children in meal planning

Involve your children in helping to plan nutritious meals and snacks.

Make a game of it by challenging your children to come up with healthy snack and meal ideas using foods they enjoy.

Shop together for whole grain breads, vegetables and fruit, lower fat milk and alternatives and lean meats or alternatives. Try this [grocery store checklist](#).

Have children help pack balanced lunches for school. Read the article [Packing Healthy School Lunches and Snacks FAQs](#).

Try these [menu planning tools](#) as a family.

Enjoy meals together

Enjoy mealtimes as a family as often as possible to encourage your children to develop healthy eating habits. Mealtimes provide an opportunity to model healthy eating, talk about your day and connect.

Pick nights of the week that will be 'family meal nights' that you can all look forward to.

Make meal prep and cleanup a family affair. Young children can help set or clear the table. Older children can make part of a meal like a salad or even a full meal once a week.

Avoid eating in front of the television at mealtimes

Get your family moving more

Try these suggestions for getting active every day.

Build physical activity into your daily routines. Try walking when doing errands or getting to school.

Help your children learn and practice new skills like tossing a Frisbee, riding a bike or shooting hoops.

Limit time spent watching television, playing video games or being on the computer.

Try picking a day or more each week as 'no TV/computer' days.

Get more tips from [a parent's guide to physical activity for kids](#).

Set a positive example

Remember that children learn by example. If they see their parents and siblings enjoying nutritious foods and being active, they will be more likely to follow their lead.

Enjoy healthy foods from all four food groups

Make wise food choices when shopping or eating out

Make time to be active with your children a few times a week.

Find out more

[Parent's Influence on Children's Eating Habits](#)

[Family Meals with no TV](#)

[Cooking with Kids](#)