

Eating Smart; Eating Healthy

Does the idea of preparing a balanced meal for your family nightly seem overwhelming? Have you gotten into the habit of getting take out or going through the drive through on most nights because it is easier or quicker? Maybe you feel that you don't even know what is healthy anymore since there are so many different diet trends and you are on nutrition information overload: low fat, low-carb, gluten free, vegan, paleo. *The best advice is moderation: eat a balanced diet, cut down on salty and sugary goods, and don't over eat.*

Parents and caregivers play a key role in not only making healthy choices for children and teaching children to make healthy choices for themselves. But in today's busy world, this isn't always easy.

A healthy diet includes a variety of whole foods, including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes (dried beans and peas), nuts and seeds. For additional protein, you can add in moderate amounts of fish, poultry, lean meats, and low-fat and fat-free dairy products. The food that you stock your house with directly influences your family's food choices. Surrounding your family with healthier options will leave them no choice but to eat better food.

Here are five key areas to make small changes that can make a huge difference and add up to changes in your family's eating habits:

1. Incorporate fruits & vegetables into your child's meal. Kids should eat five servings of fruits and vegetables a day. You can serve fresh, frozen, and canned fruits and vegetables. Offer your child 100% juice, with no added sugar. Try mixing vegetables into dishes, such as adding peas to rice, or cucumbers to a sandwich.

Make it fun for kids to try new fruits and vegetables. Let them pick out a new fruit or vegetable in the grocery store each week, then figure out together how to cook or prepare it in a healthy way.

2. Reduce Your Family's Fat and Sugar Intake. You can do this by switching to low or non-fat milk, yogurt and cheese, choosing lean cuts of meat like skinless chicken or extra lean ground beef, and bake or grill instead of fry. Also, when cooking substitute olive or vegetable oil for butter. Have your child drink water or low-fat milk for sodas or sweetened beverages. Switch to lower sugar breakfast cereals, and switch desserts like ice cream and cake for fruit-based desserts.

Drink sparkling water, unsweetened tea or sugar-free beverages instead of sugar sweetened soda or tea. Add lemon, lime or berries to beverages for extra flavor.

3. Reduce the number of snacks served each day. Leave a bowl of fruit on the kitchen table. Incorporate fruits and vegetables into every snack, such as fruit or carrot and celery sticks with hummus. Differentiate between snacks that require permission (cookies), versus

snacks that kids can take freely (fresh or dried fruit). Save "treats", such as cakes and cookies, for special occasions like birthdays and holidays.

Package your own healthy snacks. Put cut-up veggies and fruits in portion-sized containers for easy, healthy snacking on the go, without the added sugars and sodium.

4. Reduce portion sizes. Children are smaller than adults and should therefore eat smaller portions. Use smaller plates when serving dinner to your children. Don't force your children to clean their plates if they are full. Remember, your child's portions should be about the size of the back of their fist. Begin dinner with a small portion, your child can have seconds if they are still hungry.

When you cook at home you have more control over ingredients and portion sizes, so aim to cook at home more often than eating out. Try making a pot of soup, stew or a casserole on the weekend that you can re-heat later in the week. Double the recipe and freeze meal-sized portions for times when you're just too busy to cook. Wash salad greens, vegetables and fruit with a spoonful of white vinegar as soon as you're home from the grocery store. They'll last longer and will be ready to made into a salad, cooked for dinner or be available for a handy snack.

5. Eat together as a family. Family meals should focus on eating and enjoying food and quality time together. Eating together as a family a chance for you to model good behavior. Lastly, regular scheduling meal and snack times will help kids learn structure for eating and mealtime.

Get your kids in the kitchen! They'll be more excited about eating healthy foods when they've been involved. Give them age-appropriate tasks and keep a step stool handy.

Nutrition

Side Bar #1:

Beware of Trans Fats

Trans fat is considered by many doctors to be the worst type of fat you can eat. Some meat and dairy products contain small amounts of naturally occurring trans-fat. But most trans fat is formed through an industrial process that adds hydrogen to vegetable oil, which causes the oil to become solid at room temperature. Get in the habit of reading ingredients labels when you're at the grocery store.

Trans fat can be found in many of the same foods as saturated fat. These can include:

- Coffee creamer
- Crackers, cookies, cakes, frozen pies, and other baked goods
- Fast food
- Frozen pizza
- Ready-to-use frostings
- Refrigerated dough products (such as biscuits and cinnamon rolls)
- Snack foods (such as microwave popcorn)
- Vegetable shortenings and stick margarines

Instead, try these healthier alternatives:

- Unsaturated fats, such as butter, but in much smaller amounts.
- Substitute saturated vegetable fats, including palm and coconut oils.
- Use a blend of monounsaturated or polyunsaturated vegetable oils to get the shelf life, taste and texture of trans fats.

Side Bar #2:

How to Incorporate More Whole Grains at Meals

- To eat more whole grains, substitute a whole-grain product for a refined product:
 - Use whole-wheat bread instead of white bread for sandwiches.
 - Substitute brown rice instead of white rice.
 - Whole Wheat Pasta instead of White Pasta. There are a number of different varieties available, each with different texture and taste.
- Prepare mixed dishes with whole grains, such as:
 - Barley in vegetable soup or stews.
 - Bulgur wheat in a casserole or stir-fry.
 - Whole-grain bread or cracker crumbs in meatloaf.
 - Rolled oats or a crushed, unsweetened whole grain cereal as breading for baked chicken, fish, veal cutlets, or eggplant Parmesan.
- Try substituting whole wheat or oat flour for up to half of the flour in pancake, waffle, muffin or other flour-based recipes. There are many recipes and cookbooks available that substitute healthier flours for white flour.
- Try an unsweetened, whole grain ready-to-eat cereal as croutons in salad or in place of crackers with soup.
- Freeze leftover cooked brown rice, bulgur, or barley. Heat and serve it later as a quick side dish.

Side Bar #3:

Tips for Adding More Vegetables to Your Family's Diet

- Buy fresh vegetables in season. It is most cost effective and they are likely to be at their peak flavor.
- Stock up on frozen vegetables for quick and easy cooking in the microwave.

- Buy vegetables that are easy to prepare. Pick up pre-washed bags of salad greens and add baby carrots or grape tomatoes for a salad in minutes.
- Prepare and cut your veggies such as baby carrots or celery sticks in the beginning of the week so you can grab them for quick snacks.
- Use a microwave to quickly warm up your vegetables. White or sweet potatoes can be prepared quickly this way.
- Try crunchy vegetables, raw or lightly steamed.
- Add grated or chopped vegetables to meatloaf, burgers or pasta sauces.

Additional Information:

Whole Grain Recipes

<http://wholegrainscouncil.org/recipes>

http://www.eatingwell.com/recipes_menus/collections/healthy_whole_grains_recipes

<http://www.realsimple.com/food-recipes/recipe-collections-favorites/healthy-meals/whole-grain-recipes>

Resources

Meet the Fats: Some are Bad, Some Are Better

https://www.schoolnutritionandfitness.com/data/pdf/Facts_on_Fats.pdf

Let's Move: America's Move to Raise a Healthier Generation of Kids

<http://www.letsmove.gov/healthy-families>

Healthy Diets

<https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/diets.html>

Choose My Plate: Dietary Guidelines

<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/>

Trans Fat is Double Trouble for Your Heart

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/high-blood-cholesterol/in-depth/trans-fat/art-20046114?>

Trans Fats at a Glance

<http://www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/ucm079609.htm>