

[IMAGE]

Improve Your Children's Health in Three Easy Steps

By Editorial Staff

Let's face facts: It's getting increasingly difficult for kids to grow up healthy these days. Between the technology explosion that keeps them glued to the iPod, Wii and cellphone for days, to the empty-calorie snacks filling the average home's cupboard, to the discontinued PE programs at school, children are growing up – and just playing growing – at a faster pace than ever. As a parent, what can you do? Small changes can make a big difference; here are a few to get you started:

1. Just say no ... to candy and soda. Eliminating these two items alone from the home reduces your child's daily exposure to potentially thousands of empty calories and hundreds of grams of diabetes-promoting, obesity-contributing sugar. Trust us, your kids will still enjoy their fair share of these two non-nutritive pleasures at special occasions, but they don't need to be a daily temptation. Remove it from the household and you'll be doing your kids a major health favor.

2. High-tech, low use ... is the catch phrase to remember when it comes to your children's use of technology. Yes, they can play video games; yes, they can have a cell phone at an appropriate age; yes, they can use the home computer – but set a per-child limit that's tied into their TV time so as not to exceed 1-2 hours daily. If they want to play a video game for an hour, that's fine, but don't let them linger for two hours and then move right into another hour of TV time. Take control and let technology be a blessing, not a health burden.

3. Move it or lose it ... by making exercise a daily requirement, not a fun option. Children respond to schedules and routine; that's why you post the list of chores, the school schedule, and the calendar of family activities on the refrigerator. But why not exercise, too? Block out 30-60 minutes, minimum, each day for your children to do something active, whether it's riding bikes, running an obstacle course, playing a sport, doing a quick routine of low-impact exercises, or anything else that elevates their heart rate, burns a few calories and, most importantly, gets them off the couch while developing a mindset of, *exercise is an important part of my life every day!*

With childhood obesity becoming a major concern among health care providers and parents alike, there's no better time than now to plant lifelong seeds of good health by teaching your children these and other healthy habits. Talk to your doctor for more information.

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