

[IMAGE]

How To Help Your Kids Adopt Healthy Habits For Life

By Julie T. Chen, MD

Children are malleable beings and sometimes that means we have a handful on our hands...but sometimes, that works in our favor. In the case of trying to help your kids adopt healthy lifestyle habits, this malleability can work in our favor.

There are a few top areas of concern in regards to your children's health that I think parents need to try to tackle at all times until your kids adopt the habit into their own routine and these are:

1. Eating vegetables at most or all meals
2. Making exercise a priority
3. Making sleep a priority
4. Avoiding processed drinks and foods

Many of my patients in my integrative medicine clinic in San Jose CA will give up on trying to get their kids to eat vegetables after their kids refuse veggies once or twice. In my experience, if they are given a variety of options and frequently in different preparation styles, more often than not, my patients have seen that their kids will then start to accept the vegetables. They may not necessarily love vegetables, but they start to accept the fact that they need to eat them.

So, I would recommend to keep trying and to keep trying different vegetables and in various different dishes. However, if you feel like you've tried everything you can and repetitively but find that your children still refuse vegetables in its natural format, you may want to try to puree them into your sauces like spaghetti sauce or sauces you put over meats so that they at least get the nutrients of the vegetables without having to actually taste the texture.

healthy habits - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark If your children already like eating vegetables, then you need to make sure that you encourage movement and exercise as a daily habit as well as making sleep a sacred priority for your kids. As a family, encouraging at least weekend outdoor or indoor activities that keep their bodies moving is a good thing. If they grow up feeling like being active is a natural thing, they are more likely to do it as adults. So, going for hikes or bike riding on the weekends or going indoor

skating or working out with your kids are good ways for your kids to see how much fun exercise can be.

What people say about seeing is believing is actually true for most healthy habits. So if you want your kids to make sleep a priority, you need to as well. Many of my patients will set a lights out time in the house for every one so that their children can see how important sleep is. If they are well rested, many issues like ADHD and mood fluctuations as well as even level of stress can be tempered since sleep helps with our body's ability to manage stress hormones as well as help balance and repair our neurotransmitters.

Finally, avoiding processed foods and drinks are just as important as eating vegetables because what we eat heavily defines how our health will be. So even if you are eating a lot of vegetables, if the other things you are eating are refined and processed, your body is still more likely to be inflamed. Eating processed foods can put your kids at risk for any genetic predisposition they may have towards various diseases, so make sure you stock your house with healthy real food options instead of foods that come in packages or wrappers or tin cans. You have to be a good role model because kids will likely look towards you for what is normal behavior, so keep that in mind the next time you are at the grocery store and deliberating on what to buy.

When it comes down to it, I can sum up the best way to help your kids adopt healthy lifestyle changes in just three words...Live It Yourself! You'll never go wrong if you are doing the right things, your body will benefit and your children's health will as well.

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