

[IMAGE]

Healthy Habits 101

Ways to Teach Your Children the Value of a Healthy Lifestyle

By Editorial Staff

We all want to teach our children to grow up healthy, but these days, where do we start? Here are 10 ways to help children develop healthy habits, courtesy of the American Heart Association (www.americanheart.org).

- 1. Practice what you preach.** It's considerably easier to convince your children to adopt healthy habits if you're doing the same. Lead by example and your children will follow.
- 2. Involve the whole family.** Establishing a regular pattern of exercising as a family accomplishes two important things: It keeps everyone in shape and serves as important bonding time.
- 3. Limit screen time.** Too much time watching television or playing video/computer games can lead to excessive snacking and a sedentary lifestyle. Get them out of the house and staying active.
- 4. Make it fun.** Let your children discover which specific healthy activities they truly enjoy. If they don't like it, they won't stick with it.
- 5. Focus on the positives.** Celebrate your children's successes and help them develop a healthy self-image. Low self-esteem can lead to poor eating, exercise and lifestyle habits.

Young boy sitting on a stack of books. - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark
- 6. Set goals and limits.** If goals are excessively restrictive or vague, children are less likely to rise to the challenge. Establish clear nutrition and exercise goals (dessert two times a week; a half-hour walk five times a week, etc.).
- 7. Reward wisely.** Rather than rewarding children with desserts or sugary snacks (a common tactic), find healthy ways to show a job well done.

8. Turn them into chefs. Get your children involved in planning and preparing meals; then sit down at the dinner table together and enjoy the healthy meal you've created together.

9. Knowledge is power. Teach children the value of reading food labels and being aware of the healthy (and not so healthy) ingredients in the foods they eat.

10. Don't pass the buck. You're the parent - that means it's up to you to teach your children about good health. School and health care providers can only do so much. That's a fairly big responsibility for you to shoulder, but it's the most important investment you can make in your children's long-term well-being.

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