

6 Building Blocks for a Happy, Healthy Life

1

Move!



Kids need an hour of exercise every day to build strong bones and muscles. It also helps them stick to a healthy weight, and can even help prevent anxiety and depression. And it still counts if you split that hour into shorter blocks of time.

Make it fun:

Exercise doesn't have to feel like work! Turn up the tunes and have a dance-off. Race each other to the end of the block. Play tag with the dog. Go for an after-dinner bike ride, and negotiate a possible ice cream stop as a reward.

2

Choose healthy foods



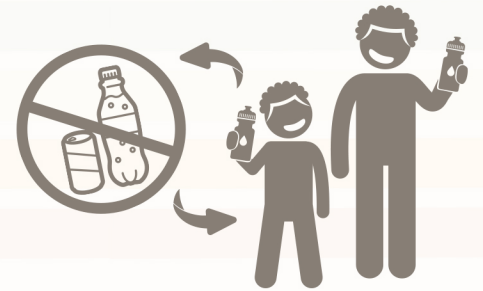
Learning to eat smart while they're young keeps kids strong and healthy now – and helps prevent diabetes, obesity, heart disease, cancer, and other serious diseases later in life.

Make it fun:

Use fresh fruits and veggies to create food art on your plates. Make a game of comparing food labels when you shop and see who can find the healthiest options. Got a picky eater? Plan menus together and let them choose the vegetables.

3

Swap soda for water



Chugging sugary sodas, fruit juice, and energy drinks is a recipe for weight gain and cavities – not to mention diabetes and heart disease. Drinking water instead keeps kids well-hydrated with no sugar or calories.

Make it fun:

Flavor water with lemon, lime, or orange slices and serve it in fun pitchers and glasses. Experiment with other fruits, veggies, and herbs – try cucumber and mint! Keep kids' favorite water bottles filled and on hand for sports games and outings.

4

Wash your hands



It's the #1 way to keep germs from spreading and prevent colds and other illnesses. But you have to do it right: Scrub for 20 seconds with soap and warm running water, then dry hands thoroughly.

Make it fun:

Teach your kids to sing "Happy Birthday" twice while they scrub to make sure they wash long enough. "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" or the alphabet song works, too – or have them make up their own silly song.

5

Brush and floss



You need to brush and floss to prevent cavities and gum disease, so teach your kids to get in the habit now: Brush twice, floss once. Every day.

Make it fun:

Let them choose their own toothbrush – maybe one with their favorite cartoon character, or an inexpensive electric one that beeps when it's time to move on to the next spot. Let them pick their own toothpaste, too. Kids tend to slack off when they brush, so remember to supervise!

6

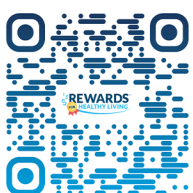
Get enough sleep



Studies show getting enough sleep improves kids' attention, memory, behavior, and learning – and boosts their health in general. Kids in grade school need about 9 to 12 hours each night.

Make it fun:

Turn off phones and other electronics about an hour before bed and create a settle-down routine that gets your child ready for rest. Dim the lights, read a favorite book together, or see who can come up with the funniest story about their day.



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