



Respect

Communication

Modeling good behavior: Nutrition and Exercise

It is no secret that today's lifestyle is hectic for most families, and making home-cooked meals and exercising are often not made high priorities. The importance of sitting down to dinner each night as a way for families to connect and talk is well documented: Research shows these family meals benefit kids by giving them better self-esteem, helping them excel at school and making them less likely to engage in risky behaviors. Eating together also helps kids see mealtime as a time for socializing and sharing while allowing parents to model healthy eating and offer up nutritious meals. But how do we make time for healthy eating and fit in some exercise as well on a regular basis? Here are some simple ideas you can use to incorporate a healthy lifestyle into your daily routine:

- **Lead by example.** Adult family members are important role models for health and exercise. Explain why you go for walks, pick an apple instead of a candy bar for a snack or take a yoga class with a friend.
- **Start your children young.** It's easier to maintain a healthy lifestyle from a young age than have to enforce good choices after eating an unhealthy diet for many years.
- **Be active together.** Make it part of your family's typical routine to get outside and be active together, including biking, walking and hiking. Being active as a family allows kids to get out their energy with positive results for everyone. We live in a scenic area with easy access to biking and hiking trails so get out there and take advantage!
- **Cook together.** Start at the grocery store by bringing your kids and explaining to them what you are buying and why. Let them pick out their favorite fruit or have fun finding the colors of the rainbow in all of the fruit and vegetable varieties. When time allows, invite your kids into the kitchen to help prepare a meal with you. Little ones can learn skills such as math and teamwork by measuring and following directions, plus get an understanding of the chemistry of cooking. Older kids will enjoy having some authority to choose and prepare meals they like and will be more likely to eat what they have made themselves. It may even inspire them to make healthy choices all on their own.
- **Eat together.** One of the biggest misconceptions about family meals is that it has to be dinner. Look at the schedule for a typical day in your family's routine and see what meal works best. It may be breakfast with everyone gathered around the table over eggs and green smoothies, or it could be the evening snack before bed. All that matters is that everyone is talking and engaged with each other about their day.
- **Family Goals Chart.** Post a chart in a highly visible spot in your home to help keep everyone in the family on track. Choose family goals such as daily exercise or eating fruits and vegetables and keep track of who is achieving them on a daily basis. When everyone has hit their goals do something fun as a family to celebrate!

It's always best to consult with your doctor before starting any new exercise or dietary changes.

Sources: kidshealth.org, 100 Days of Real Food, Livestrong

Health

Trust

Honesty



**Giving you the building blocks
and tools to create a safe and
healthy home environment**

**Family
Values**