

parent tips

Help Your Kids Eat Healthy and Move More

Most children won't change their eating and activity habits on their own. But they can learn to eat healthy and be more active – with your help!



Share your plans with your family:

- Explain to your family why it's important to you that they eat healthy and move more.
- For older kids, talk about what it means to eat healthy and be active. Let them know you trust them to make good choices for food and physical activity.
- Set goals with your family for eating, physical activity, and screen time.

Point out the benefits:

- Kids might not care that eating fruits and vegetables now helps to prevent diseases when they grow up. Focus on things that matter to your kids now. Here are some ideas:
 - > Eating well will help them grow healthy and strong.
 - > Choosing healthy foods will give them energy to play sports and do activities with their friends.
 - > Being active and eating healthy can help them from getting sick and missing time and activities with friends.

Ask for ideas:

- Ask your children what they think about healthy foods and physical activity.
- Every weekend, have your kids choose one physical activity for the family to try.
- Ask your kids to help choose recipes to cook for the week.

Change a little at a time:

- Don't make big changes all at once.
- Make small changes over time. Here are some examples:
 - > If you drink whole milk, switch to 2 percent milk. After a few weeks, switch to 1 percent milk. Then switch to fat-free milk.
 - > If you drive everywhere, try walking to a friend's house down the street. In a couple weeks, try walking a little farther—maybe to school or to the store.

Make healthy choices easy:

- Put healthy food where it's easy to see.
 - > Put a bowl of washed fruit, like grapes or apples, on the table.
- At snack time, offer fruit, veggies, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk products.
- Limit foods with high calories, fat, and added sugar in your home.
 - > Choosing healthy foods is easier if less-healthy foods are not in your home.
- Keep balls and other sports gear handy for playing active games outside.

Focus on fun:

- Cook a healthy new meal together.
- Do physical activities together as a family.
- Plan fun and active things on the weekends. Here are some ideas:
 - Jump rope or double dutch.
 - Walk through the zoo or on a nature trail.
 - Play in the park.
 - Go to a farmer's market or community garden.
 - Pick a project like building a tree house or painting a room in the house.



We Can! is a program from the National Institutes of Health that offers resources for parents, caregivers and communities to help children 8-13 years old stay at a healthy weight through eating right, increasing physical activity, and reducing screen time.

To learn more, go to <http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov> or call 1-866-35-WECAN.

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