

Healthy Food, Healthy Kids

by (ARA)

Childhood is a critical time for establishing lifelong eating habits. Kids who grow up in a household that promotes healthy eating are more likely to adopt those habits as their own. Luckily, nutrition doesn't have to be complicated or labor-intensive. You can find information about how to keep your kids eating healthy at <http://www.medtronic.com/healthykids>. Raising Healthy Kids also is available in a four-page translated version for parents whose first language is not English; translations are available in Hmong, Spanish and Somali. Following are a few simple tips to get you started.

1. Make healthy eating fun! Nutritious foods can be enjoyable when mixed with a little planning and creativity. Try serving frozen grapes, popcorn with seasoning salt instead of butter, carrot sticks with peanut butter or fresh fruit kabobs. Or involve your kids in the experimentation. Your kids will forget that they're eating something healthy, and you'll have fun, too!
2. Invest in healthy, portable meals or snacks for days on-the-go. Pack a bag lunch on days when you know you will be away from the house during meal or snack times. Convenient, nutritious foods such as grapes, raisins or mozzarella cheese sticks make perfect snacks and help ward off the temptation to snack on sweets or fatty foods.
3. The availability of good foods and the absence of bad foods is key. Your children will eat what's in front of them, especially when they're hungry, so make sure the good stuff is accessible. That means cutting up fruits and vegetables ahead of time and leaving them in plain sight. No time? Buy the pre-cut veggies and fruit platters.
4. Encourage your child to drink water instead of juice or soda. Both juice and soda are full of processed sugar and unnecessary calories – a whopping 250 calories in a 20 ounce bottle of soda. If your child has a sweet tooth, try quenching their thirst with sugar-free lemonade or fresh fruit instead.
5. If possible, go to the supermarket without your children. These days, aggressive advertising and marketing techniques are directed at your kids that may cause them to pester you in to buying unhealthy foods. Although it may be difficult with kids at home, shopping alone makes it easier to resist the temptation to surrender to your child's whining. On those occasions when you do need to bring your children with you, don't be afraid to say "no." For more information on raising healthy kids, go to <http://www.medtronic.com/healthykids>.

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