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Healthy Choices for Kids: How to Help Them Stay Healthy for Life

Healthy choices can sometimes be difficult for children to make; every now and then, that chocolate chip cookie wins over the bag of fresh veggies. And while the occasional treat is more than okay, it's also important to make sure your children know how to make healthy decisions, because that ability will stay with them for years to come. Many parents have tried every trick in the book when it comes to helping their little ones [eat healthfully](#) and stay active, to no avail. Unfortunately, with so many inactive choices for kids these days — video games, games and videos on the smartphone, and television shows that can be accessed from just about anywhere — it's all too easy for them to sit down and look at a screen.

Thankfully, there are several things you can do to help your child make healthy decisions every day, whether you're with them or not. It's a good idea to think in broad terms rather than just about diet and exercise; even if your child is still in elementary school, you can have a talk about making good choices in regards to not [smoking or drinking](#) alcohol, and you and your family members can try to lead by example. By having these conversations when your child is young, you can instill the ideas to carry them along through their teen years.

Here are a few tips on how to help your child stay healthy and safe.

Encourage Activity

It's not always easy to get your kids active, but there are some things you can do to make the process easier. Mixing fun with exercise is one of the keys, so think about the best ways to help your child have a great time while staying active. [Video games](#) that are interactive — such as Just Dance — are great for little ones, and you can jump in and enjoy the fun too! You can also talk to your child about joining a sport at school or with the local YMCA; just make sure you get the [right shoes](#) and athletic wear for the activity.

Don't Forget the Little Things

It can be easy to forget that eating healthfully isn't always just about making sure you get enough veggies and fruits into your diet; it's also about cutting back on caffeine and sugar, drinking enough water, and paying attention to serving sizes. Talk to your kids about how to [read food labels](#) and why it's so important to know what they mean, especially when it comes to sugar content since there are so many things that [contain sugar](#) that we don't even realize.

Set an Example

One of the easiest ways to help your child learn to make healthy decisions is to lead by example. Abusing alcohol and drugs is a temptation that many kids face, sometimes even earlier than parents would believe, so it's important to [talk to them](#) about the dangers of this behavior and to show your kids how to make good choices when faced with peer pressure. This is a different process for every family, so think about how it will work best for you.

Make It a Family Project

A great way to help your child learn how to make good choices is to allow her to assist you in [shopping and cooking](#), and to exercise together. Making these activities a family project that everyone does together will get everyone involved and will show your child that healthy decisions are important to you. Think about [healthy meal ideas](#) and ask your child to help you make out a grocery list, then go shopping together. It's amazing how proud kids are of their accomplishments in the kitchen when you let them help out.

Healthy choices now are often healthy choices for life, so talking to your kids at any age about their decisions and how to make good ones will stay with them for years to come. Remember to lead by example and help your child stay on track with gentle reminders about exercise and other activities. With a good plan, you and your family can stay healthy and happy.