

Healthy New Year's Resolution Ideas for Kids

(StatePoint) If eating healthier and getting more exercise tops your New Year's resolution list, consider extending these worthwhile goals to the whole family.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, childhood obesity in this country has more than tripled over the past 30 years. But you can help your family get the right nutrition and exercise to stay healthy.

"Not only is it extremely important for kids to get all the vitamins, nutrients and physical activity they need to stay healthy, but habits formed early in life -- both good and bad -- can last a lifetime," says Dr. Thomas McInerny, president of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

The AAP is offering some healthy living tips for parents to help kids get on the right track for the upcoming year.

Improving Eating Habits

- You may have bad childhood memories of being forced to sit at the table until you cleaned your plate. Don't perpetuate this method of mealtime management! It sends the wrong message by emphasizing quantity over quality and can lead to significant overeating. Foster a healthier attitude toward food by focusing on what you serve in the first place.

- Establish a routine with regular meal and snack times. Always eat meals at the table. Children who eat meals with their family consume more fruits, vegetables, fiber, calcium-rich foods and vitamins.

- Once kids are old enough, encourage self-feeding as much as possible.

- Avoid soda, which is full of empty calories or artificial sweeteners. Milk and water are the best drink choices for your child. Offer whole milk or 2 percent milk to children ages 12 months to 2 years old, unless your pediatrician recommends low-fat milk. After age 2, offer low-fat milk. Limit juice to four to six ounces a day.

- Kids can be picky at first, but don't let a refusal of a new food stop you from trying again. Offer new foods multiple times in multiple ways. For infants, you may need to even try 10 to 15 times over several months. Parents are



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extremely influential and can serve as a child's best role model. Eat a variety of foods of different flavors, colors and textures.

Encourage Active Play

- Don't let a full day go by without active play. Take trips to the park, play in the yard, go for walks and make physical activity a part of your family's daily routine. Reduce the amount of time spent in devices that restrain movement, such as strollers and bouncy seats.

- Limit screen time, including TV, video games and computers, to less than two hours a day. Avoid placing computers or television sets in children's bedrooms so they can get the best sleep possible.

- Encourage your kids to take part in sports teams, gymnastic and dance classes, and other activities that will get them moving.

More ideas about healthy living for families can be found at www.healthychildren.org/growinghealthy.

"No matter how old your child is, it's never too early to establish household routines that foster healthy habits," says McInerny.