



Healthy Summer Tips for Kids

Summer break is almost here and for many families that means that kids are home without a normal schedule. This may lead to less physical activity and “not so smart” food choices. Here are some fun, easy ideas to get your family eating smart and moving all summer long.

Connect with locally-grown fruits and vegetables. A fun outing can be a trip to the farmer’s market or local farm. This can help kids learn where food comes from and provide an opportunity to try new foods. Let your children choose fruits or vegetables that are interesting to them. Having kids select their own fruit or vegetable will increase the chances of them trying something new.

Re-think your summertime drinks. Beat the summer heat with water instead of filling up on excessive amounts of sugar-sweetened drinks, such as soft drinks, fruit drinks, and sweet-tea. Let kids choose a new refillable water bottle to encourage water consumption. Slices of cucumber, lemon, orange, strawberries or even melon can add flavor and pizzazz. Make it a habit to serve a cold glass of low-fat or fat-free milk with dinner. Kids and adults need the calcium and vitamin D. Limit fruit juice to one small glass a day and be sure to select 100% fruit juice.

Get outdoors and move. It’s as easy as a basketball hoop, a Frisbee® or a sprinkler for splashing on a hot summer day. Instead of sending the kids out to play by themselves, go out with them and enjoy old-fashioned fun, like freeze tag, hide-and-seek, kick the can, horseshoes or badminton. Plan a scavenger hunt with other families or set up a bicycle obstacle course with traffic cones. Trade dog walking duties with neighbors: one family in the morning, the other in the evening.

Move more indoors. From games such as Twister® to Wii®, you can get the entire family off the couch and on their feet.

Get your kids involved in preparing foods in the kitchen. From baking muffins, making smoothies, to preparing meals, there are many activities you can do to help your kids learn basics of cooking.

Use grocery trips as a learning activity. Older kids can collect coupons, learn how to compare prices, and select healthy food choices. If you have a toddler, help them to identify colors and shapes. Have preschoolers, compare sizes of different fruits and vegetables and 4-6 year olds can find veggies and fruits that begin with each letter of the alphabet.

To improve snack habits keep a bowl on the counter with freshly washed, ready to eat fruits and veggies. And remember to enjoy these snacks yourself - children are more likely to eat fruits and vegetables if they see their parents enjoying them daily and if they readily available at home.

IF you bake - bake smart. Add fresh or dried fruits, like raisins, pineapples and berries to muffins, pancakes, cookies or cakes. You can also add finely chopped or shredded vegetables to pizzas and muffins to increase your child’s intake of vitamins and minerals. Your children may never notice when you sneak a little extra something into their meal or snack. It could be anything from zucchini muffins, to banana bread, or carrot bars.

Stay cool with fruit popsicles. Add canned fruit to fruit juice and place in ice molds. Freeze and enjoy with your kids.

Grill out. Try grilling fresh vegetables and fruits – grilled corn or grilled peaches are sure to be a winner for the entire family.

Take a break during those road trips and fit some active fun into a long trip. Pack a small bag of ‘rest-stop toys,’ like a Frisbee®, a soccer ball, a couple of mitts and a baseball or a few Nerf® toys. A 15-minute break will help everybody be in a better mood. Pack fruit and veggie snacks – try spreading peanut butter onto celery sticks, apples, or bananas for a special treat.

Be a role model. When kids see their parents or friends being physically active and trying new foods, they are more likely to do it, too. Be sure to keep a variety of healthy options available at home. Make it a fun game by experimenting with new and different fruits and vegetables.

This is the perfect time of the year to practice healthy eating and make sure everyone has a safe, healthy, and nutritious summer.