

Food, Eating & Our Kids: Tips Towards Health
Topic: Set Your Home Up for Healthy Eating in '05
By Hope Warshaw, RD

Phew, you survived another year of holiday feasting and the children are back in the school groove. Now, if you are like a majority of Americans you are busy implementing your New Year's resolutions and one may be to lose weight and eat healthier. Unfortunately, too many people fail in this attempt. That's because they don't change their environment enough to make changes to last a lifetime.

A way to help all family members eat healthier in '05, and beyond, is to set your home up for healthy eating—change the environment. This change makes healthy eating easier to accomplish. We know all too well that if certain foods aren't around, it's much easier not to eat them. And with children, it's much easier to limit those heated “discussions.”

Did You Know?

According to a 2003 American Dietetic Association Foundation survey about attitudes and behaviors regarding weight, eating and physical activity; children from age 8 to 17 said that their parents were their strongest role model. We topped sports celebrities! This result shows how much influence we have and should use when it comes to what and how we feed our children.

One way to be a role model in '05 is to set your home up for healthy eating. Here are some tips...

Tips for Action:

- ☑ **Shop and stock healthier:** Be the gatekeeper. Limit the variety and amounts of those hard-to-resist, not-so-healthy foods—cookies, candy, ice cream, fried snacks, regular soda, sugary drinks, and high fat convenience foods. Choose healthier options when available: pretzels, popcorn, baked snacks and foods, water and low-calorie sweetened drinks.
- ☑ **Stock plenty of fruits and vegetables and make them ready-to-eat:** Take note—More than 75 percent of children ages 6-11 do not even eat three servings of fruits and vegetables a day. The goal for children is at least 5-a-day—strive for 5. Make fruits and vegetables ready-to-eat to increase consumption at meals and snacks. Select fruits and vegetables that are kid's favorites:
 - Fruits: pre-wash grapes and berries, slice apples and pears, offer clementines, have dried or canned fruit at-the-ready.
 - Vegetables: have cherry/grape tomatoes, baby carrots and sliced peppers. Let children dip cooked or raw vegetables in their favorite dressing or plain yogurt.
- ☑ **Feature one new food each week:** Due to a variety of factors, from fast food, school lunch offerings and our notion of the foods we believe children like best; our children's scope of foods is narrowing. Reverse that trend! Buy and prepare one new food each week to broaden your children's food horizons.

- ☑ **Eat Out, Order-Out Less:** It's oh-so-easy to eat out or order out. While there are plenty of healthier foods to choose from at restaurants, it's all too easy to eat less healthy and eat too much.
- ☑ **Engage Children in Food Prep:** Too many children are not learning the essential life skills of food preparation. Engage them in the kitchen. Start with easy jobs, such as peeling vegetables, mashing potatoes, or wrapping up leftovers.
- ☑ **Preplan - Be Ready to Fix Favorite Healthy Dinners:** Determine at least three quick and easy healthy family favorite dinners. Then always have the ingredients for these on hand.
- ☑ **Make Extras and Stash:** Double and triple a family favorite recipe. Stash a few extra meals in the freezer for those nights when preparing a meal is just impossible. Defrost, make a salad, sit and eat.
- ☑ **Fit in more Activity:** There's no doubt our kids aren't active enough, yet we know there are so many benefits to keeping them fit. Fit in more activity by integrating more activity into your daily routines. Consider walking children to school or the bus (if you live too far away); when you shop, park as far away from the store as possible; take a pre or post dinner or weekend walk, bike or scooter ride around the block (yes warmer weather would help!).

For Your Interest: *Rate your Child's Food and Fitness Habits* at The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development web site: www.nichd.nih.gov/milk/quiz.pdf is a short survey to do with your child.

Hope Warshaw, RD is a registered dietitian in Northern Virginia and the author of several self-help nutrition and diabetes books. This article is one of a series she has created for elementary school newsletters.

© Hope Warshaw Associates (www.hopewarshaw.com)