



Help children develop good eating habits

For both adults and children, staying fit is much easier than getting fit. Maintaining a healthy weight is much the same. But providing children with opportunities to lead a healthy life can be challenging. Opportunities to be sedentary are in abundance, as well as a plethora of wonderful-tasting high-calorie/low-nutrient foods. What's a parent to do?

Parents also are constantly challenged to find the right balance between busy school schedules and providing adequate opportunities to stay active and fit.

The greatest challenge, however, can be helping a child to develop a lifelong healthy lifestyle without generating resistance that can backfire.

Question: Are there resources that offer ways to help children develop good eating and exercise habits?

Answer: Both the United States Department of Agriculture and the American Heart Association provide diet and physical activity guidelines for children.

Both groups place a strong emphasis on physical activity as well as a wholesome, balanced and varied diet. Health professionals now recognize that dietary guidelines without activity recommendations cover only half of the equation for health.

Visit the kids section of www.MyPyramid.gov or check out the Dietary Guidelines for Healthy Children at www.americanheart.org.

Q: How else can parents cope with their children's eating and exercise behaviors?

A: Dietitian Ellyn Satter has a wonderful commonsense approach to simplify this daunting task. She sets out responsibilities for both parents and chil-

dren: Parents are responsible for what, when and where to eat; children are responsible for how much and whether they eat.

These responsibilities might seem simplistic, but if parents present primarily good, healthful foods for meals and scheduled snacks, children can do the rest.

Satter has produced sensible, practical and affordable books on healthy eating from pregnancy through adolescence.

Her Web site also has a wealth of information with valuable tips to help adults with successful feeding of children. See www.ellynsatter.com.

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