

"The Holiday Season Doesn't Mean Taking a Holiday from Good Health!"

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The pandemic of obesity is approaching 2 billion people worldwide which includes close to 30 million children. Primary prevention through positive repetitive behavior and lifestyle modification is the cornerstone and most efficient way to avoiding future adverse health and economic consequences.

If tackled with a day-by-day approach, these can be achieved, especially if parents and their children can foresee how these new habits will benefit the entire family and use that as motivation to keep working towards their goals.

Here are some examples:

- **Eat a healthy, well-balanced diet.** If parents are eating a healthy diet, chances are there will be more fruits and vegetables in the house, which in turn, will provide healthier options for youngsters when looking in the refrigerator for something to eat. By making healthy food the norm around the house, children may be more likely to gravitate toward them when making their own food selections outside the home.
- **Have “active” activities.** Television, video games and computers often compete for children’s – as well as adults’ – free time. Parents can convert some couch time into an “active” hobby they and their child can share together, such as cooking, shopping or playing catch in the yard. Not only does this get everyone moving but it also creates an opportunity for some quality family time.
- **Take time to relax.** From sleeping problems to headaches to an inability to concentrate, stress has an uncanny way of building up in a person until it inevitably reveals itself through physical or mental symptoms. It is important that at a young age, a person learns how to deal with stress. Parents can show children how to deal with difficult situations and explain why it is important to take time out to relax on a regular basis. Ideas for children (and adults too) include writing in a journal, talking with friends or reading a book.
- **Get moving.** Another way to bond with children while relieving stress is to exercise. By exercising regularly, parents not only improve their own health but also teach their children how important it is for them to take care of themselves. There are plenty of ways parents can include their children in an exercise routine, such as going ice skating, teaching a child to swim or hiking in the woods.
- **Book it.** Be sure to set aside time for exercise, relaxation and those “active” activities. By writing these activities down in the family calendar, they become set appointments just like the dates for school plays, doctor’s appointments and ballet lessons. It is also a way parents can teach their children about time management, which in turn can help everyone deal with stress better.

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